

920 6 Gertrude Brooke Hamilton 1 CENTS

# AINSLIE'S

THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS



"BUILDING AIR CASTLES"

# "I Said Hires"



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Number Nine**

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Vol. XLV

AUGUST, 1920

No. 6

# AINSLIE'S

*The Magazine That Entertains*

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# Touch the Corn

with Blue-jay, and it goes

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It was invented by a chemist who spent years in corn study. It is produced by a surgical dressing laboratory of world-wide repute.

The method is called Blue-jay. It comes in liquid form or plaster—as you choose.

A simple touch applies it, and the corn pain stops. In a little while the whole corn loosens and comes out.

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Blue-jay comes in both liquid and plaster form. Tell your druggist which style you prefer.

**BAUER & BLACK** Chicago New York Toronto  
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# AINSLEE'S

VOL. XLV.

AUGUST, 1920.

No. 6.



## The Safety Match

By Gertrude Brooke Hamilton

Author of "On Whom the Ladies Dote," etc.

### CHAPTER I.

THE Lorikeet girls were going abroad for a while. Their father had died the year before, leaving not quite enough money to keep up the Lorikeet home in a semifashionable block of Manhattan, yet sufficient to travel on if their régime embraced good management and, perhaps, a little social grafting now and then.

Fan was over thirty, plain and ambitious. Sandra was under twenty, a beauty and a worldling. Fan nurtured a desire to marry her younger sister off brilliantly. Sandra was not averse to the plan.

They were going abroad for a winter on the Riviera, because the circles in which they had moved since Sandra's coming-out tea seemed to Fan rather restricted. Fan was always reaching out and up for Sandra. Nothing less than a husband with lineage, social prestige, and financial ascendancy would do. And as this great *parti* had yet to dawn on the Lorikeet horizon, it might be said that they were going afar to find him!

So the Lorikeet home was being dismantled. Big storage vans were drawn

up before the house, a graceful residence with burnished brasses, symmetry of outline, and a general air of charm. Within, Fan was directing the removal of their lares and penates.

Even viewed amid crated furniture and boxed china, Fan Lorikeet was a modish woman. She had a well-corseted figure, hair whose waves undulated stiffly as a painted sea, eyes with trivially arrogant pupils, a snobbish nose, and a voice whose pitch easily verged on affectation. A spontaneity of manner, which added to Fan's animation, was indicative of much nervous energy. Under her supervision, the *mêlée* of moving lost none of its attendant excitement.

In an upper chamber of the house, secluded from the dust and disorder of the day, Sandra—christened Cassandra—sat at her vanity table, sorting her jewelry.

Triple mirrors reflected the beauty's face from three angles: a delicately audacious profile with spirited nose line, exquisitely molded mouth, and long, curving throat; a three-quarter view of smooth cheek and golden-brown lashes; a full reflection of dark, oblong eyes, close waves of hair neither blond nor

brunet, but shimmering off into a molten shade, lips thoroughly adorable, and a chin tilted high over a deliciously young throat. Sandra assuredly had the indubitable quality which renders inflammable the sex without which no match can be struck!

She laid aside certain baubles of uncertain value to bestow on a poor relation. The relative to benefit by this generosity was Lilly Polk, a cousin of their father's, who lived on Staten Island and was generally about when the Lorikeet girls shed a season's wardrobe or tired of some household accessory. Closing the jewel box, Sandra put pointed finger tips under her chin and looked into the beveled trio of mirrors. The furnishings of the room reflected there had escaped the storage men, as the gray-and-poppy bedroom suite was to go to Lilly Polk.

Fan had had the room done by an interior decorator, whose task evolved into an ode to Sandra. There was a gray enameled bed, slim, with poppy canopy and valance, there were twin bookcases of gray enamel set each side of the fireplace, spider-legged chairs, wall candelabra, divans just the length for a lounging slim body, gray-and-poppy rugs, and a flowery night lamp on a tall gray taboret. Sandra found herself looking at these things in the mirrors, while the sounds of depletion went on below stairs.

Presently the storage vans lumbered off. Cousin Lilly Polk departed to order smaller vans for the removal of sundry acquisitions to Staten Island. Fan came up to the gray-and-poppy room.

Cassandra's sister seldom admitted fatigue, and the way she sank on a divan seemed merely a cessation of energies.

"You may be thankful I shoed you up here, Sandra," she said, "for the street dirt that came in was ruinous! Such an upheaval! I gave cousin Lilly the parrot andirons and poor papa's fa-

vorite chair—I couldn't bear to see them stored!" Fan gave a passing sigh as she cushioned her feet one over the other.

"Well," she added with another sigh, "the furniture has gone. And we sail for the south of France to-morrow. To a small hotel in Nice, recommended by no less a cosmopolite than the Englishman who bought so many fandangles of you in that gypsy bazaar at the Plaza. What a pity this Perce Dawes isn't an eligible! He predicts an overwhelming success for you across the water. And, surely, a man of his type knows!"

"He *should* know," nodded Sandra with a ripple of satire. "A seasoned man of the world whose chief aim is to outjig thoughts of a wife he's separated from should surely be a connoisseur on such subjects, Fanny."

Fan's regard of the face in the triple mirrors had its quota of pardonable complacency.

"Sophistries are out of place in that mouth of yours, dear. Be very nice to Mr. Dawes, who with some relatives of his—smart London folk—will be in Nice at the same time we are, in a hotel on the Promenade des Anglais. A man like Dawes can prove invaluable in our campaign for that fortunate husband of yours." She rose. Going toward her own dismantled room, she said:

"Jerry Pollock has asked us in to dine this evening. His man, Lewis, came over with the suggestion as the last things were leaving. Otherwise, we might have had to slip into some quiet hotel for dinner, as I've sent off all the servants except your personal maid, Ellie, who is going with us to keep you fit, my dear."

"How dependable Jerry is!" cried Sandra.

"A good neighbor," nodded Fan, as she opened a bag for negligee and bath towels, preparatory to tubbing away the "ruinous dirt" of the moving. Of the neighbor who had asked them in to dine



she commented further: "Jerome is the only man in town who half makes me wish you plainer, my dear."

Sandra raised interrogative brows.

"If you had not more charm than Lilly Polk's girls, I'd wave thankful hands over you and Jerry Pollock," declared Fan. Towels over her arm, she looked in again at the mirrored countenance. "As it is, I expect stupendous triumphs for you, Sandra," she finished, serenely optimistic.

The oblong eyes met the trivial orbs in the glass.

"Don't count your catches before they're hatched, Fanny."

Fan laughed with her surface cadence.

"For myself," murmured the adorable lips, "I shall hold on to even——"

Fan's laugh clacked off and she darted a hasty glance at the bright reflection.

"What do you mean, babe?" peremptorily. "You haven't done anything so rash as to engage yourself to Jerome Pollock?"

"But should I entirely disengage myself?" with a shake of the molten head. "I may not prove popular on the other side. I've never been there."

"Sandra, you're talking nonsense! Yet you've a cool strain in you that I haven't." Fan saluted her sister with a bath towel. Humming a late song, a little off key, she pattered around a turn of the hall to one of the baths.

Left alone again, the younger girl cogitated over her frock for the evening, selecting it from some last-season robes laid aside for the Polks, and, ringing for Ellie, her maid, with the leisure of one whose toilet is necessarily a pleasure. Her choice of a frock was calculated to arouse the right proportion of ardor in a gentleman neither discarded nor accepted—for such was the unenviable position young Pollock held in Sandra's youthfully sagacious calculations. She had Ellie dress her molten hair discreetly for dinner with Jerry, who, prosperous, but not prosperous

enough, good looking, but not handsome enough, well-bred, but not courtly enough, merited only a modified dressing of her glorious hair, a dab of powder on cheeks and chin, a dash of the rouge stick.

Her thoughts of Jerry Pollock were ruminative. He lived alone in the adjoining house, and his solidity was represented by a rare bookshop on Fifth Avenue, which his father and his grandfather had kept before him.

As a child, Sandra had enjoyed the run of the Pollock bookshop; she had read her first fairy tales and love stories on the balconies that ran around the place and were punctuated at spots by mellowed, slow-ticking clocks; she had prowled the alcoves with their autographs and illustrious treasures; and, as a little girl with a propensity for adventure, she had roved in the catacombs of old books and pamphlets which ran below the body of the store. The priceless editions had been in charge of a manager then, Jerry's parents having been lost in a sea disaster and Jerry being still in school. Later, when young Pollock took charge, he had a swinging seat built for Sandra in one of the balconies, a reading swing cushioned in brown plush with a polished rest for her book.

She rose and clicked off the wall candles.

Fan came from her bath, neck and face red from her ebullitions, hair covered by a rubber cap.

"All dressed?" she exclaimed, and hurried to her rather rigorous toilet.

On going down the stairs and finding nowhere to sit, the house being emptied of furniture, Sandra spread her net skirts over a step of the broad hall flights. The big, stripped rooms sent her mind skidding to the future, to Nice, and whatever might come after. Perce Dawes would be at the seaport of blue skies and waters, eligible as an escort and social counselor, ever ineligible be-

cause of a nondivorced mate. There would be other men, new scenes and sensations, wider circles of life than she had known. She locked her hands behind her head, one long, slim foot dangling, eyes almost black under the thatch of her nicely arranged hair, which at a touch could tumble into a riot of molten confusion.

She was in this becoming posture of reverie when Jerry Pollock unceremoniously opened the front door and came in.

## CHAPTER II.

Jerry had a dinner corsage for Sandra in his hand, orchids and violets.

He stood still at the sight of her. His pleasure in her was obvious. His words were: "Ready for dinner, Sandra?"

She made room for him on the step, nodding.

"Fan's still dressing."

He took the steps to her. In appearance, the young authority on first editions was not unlike one of his prints, having blue-brown eyes and brown skin, a classical nose, an idyllic mouth, and clefts in his cheeks which, in a countenance less contained, might have been dimples. He dressed well and carried himself with the zest of a healthy and temperate young male in the first round of life.

"For you," he said, giving her the flowers.

She took the violets in her hand.

"Doesn't the house look ghostly with everything gone? We're to sleep here to-night, the beds going to Lilly Polk."

Jerry looked down at the empty rooms. A shadow fell on his face.

"It's almost as if my own home were being torn up," he said.

"Which it never will be," forecast Sandra sagely.

"I hope not!" He spoke definitely. "A homeless man is not to be envied."

"How about a homeless woman?" she

queried, fastening the flowers at her girdle of white panne velvet.

He caught her hand, because his own flew out without volition.

"That's what I don't like to think about," he told her.

Her eyes were down, lashes making golden blurs on her cheeks, mouth vaguely drooping.

"That's just what I do like to think about. Homeless! Uncharted!" She held her free hand over her head, hair against her bare arm, chin tilting, while her eyes came up to his. "Dear Jerry, how sober you look!" She put her cheek on his knees, in an attitude partially penitent.

His hands closed over her hair.

"You'll write to me often, Sandra?"

"Every time I'm homesick, neighbor."

He bent to whisper in her perfectly modeled ear:

"Don't go. Come live in my home with me. Marry me. Let Fan go to Nice alone."

The way she turned her head to look at him might have been taken as half an avowal, answering color in her flawless face, a tremor on her lips—yet, hearing Fan's step above, she straightened and drew back, only to bend forward and soothe his hurt by brushing her lips against his.

She stood up as Fan came down the stairs.

Fan gave their host for the evening a gracious nod which acknowledged the posies in the white girdle.

"We'll miss you, Jerry," she was good enough to say.

He opened the door for the sisters.

"I'll miss you," he replied, as Sandra and the violets went by.

Jerry escorted the Lorikeets down their steps and up the steps of his own house, a residence of impervious bulk, with solid doors of mahogany, iron gratings, and substantial window hangings. They entered his drawing-room, where a

wood fire was burning. There were flowers about, in honor of his guests.

Dinner was announced by Lewis.

The table talk dealt at first with a humorous triviality of the move. Fan had labeled barrels of linen "Handle with care" and left barrels of cut glass unprotected. Her recounting of the mistake made lively converse and set the two younger people laughing. With the pudding, Fan became not less neighborly, perhaps, but more the grand lady faring forth with a coveted prize under her wing. She spoke of the Riviera, the relief it would be to shelve the servant question for a time; she touched on the sadness of any change, and the tremendous changes in store for Cassandra.

Now and then, through the flow of Fan's words, Sandra and Jerry exchanged lingering glances, smiled, sighed, and flirted.

When dinner was over, they had a little while together, Fan seeking a telephone to confer with Lilly Polk about the removal of the poppy suite.

"Kiss me good-by now, Jerry," said the one who had inspired the gray, gay bed and valance. Lips fresh as poppy blossoms were lifted in a snatched moment of delight.

Their kiss left him somber.

"You'll not come back the same," he declared, and put her hands away.

"If good-by makes you glare so," Sandra retorted, fingers lifting to the lapels of his dinner coat, "then we'll make it—au revoir!"

"You may never come back, at all!" he cried, with Fan's predictions in his ears.

"If we can cross the ocean, so can you!" was her meditative taunt.

He caught at the suggestion.

"You mean you want me to follow you and snatch you from under the nose of European society?" The clefts in his cheeks came into play, and suddenly he threw back his head and

laughed. "I'll remember this!" he warned her.

She gave him a shining glance.

"See that you don't forget."

"Forget?" he replied with a spurt of dreaminess. Encircling her with his arms, he walked her the length of his richly toned library, his step in rhythm with hers, making the most of his moments before Fan's vigilant tread would return from the telephone in an angle of the stairs.

The evening passed. Sandra sang, in her immature contralto, "*Un Peu d'Amour*" to Fan's methodical accompaniment. Jerry sang, in his young baritone, to the same regular strumming of the piano keys:

"Say au revoir, but not good-by!

The past is dead, love cannot die!

'Twere better far had we not met!

I loved you then, I love you yet."

Their good nights were marked by the emotion of an epoch; Sandra and Jerome mute; even Fan a little stirred. He went with them to the door of their house, unfamiliar in its nudity, and offered to have his manservant sleep on the lower floor if they felt timorous without the servants. They called good nights back and forth.

Sandra wept a little in the canopied bed that sheltered her last night at home. He was so nice to kiss and play with—Jerry. But, in Nice, there would be more. Shadowless sleep soon came to her.

Fan woke her up in the morning.

"The day of the sailing, Sandra!" she cried. "We'll breakfast at ease, for Lewis has brought in a tray loaded with just what we like, and with a rose for your fingers."

The Lorikeets had a merry time being served by Lewis in their dining room, devoid of furniture, where they sat on the floor after the fashion of Turks. Then, for Fan, came the bustle of superintending the departure. And for Sandra came the swift donning of trav-

eling togs, so becoming to a slender girl of brilliant coloring. There was exhilaration in shedding their roof behind them and casting farewell glances at New York as their cab whirled them toward the docks.

Jerry was there to see them off.

Sandra, crossing the gangplank, glanced back with a look that sought to hold him while it relinquished him.

Later, when the shores of Manhattan were becoming a skyline of mercantile roofs and towers, a few more tears dimmed the radiance of the beauteous Sandra, embarking on a career shaped for her by her own sweet witcheries—the chasing down of a great *parti*.

### CHAPTER III.

In Nice, the region of dazzling skies and water, Sandra Lorikeet was like any young woman breathing sea air and having a very good time. She fairly floated in an atmosphere colorful as herself, and her sporadic letters to her intimates in America were mostly carnival snatches of description: some courtyard covered with flowers and sweet with every variety of perfume; rivulets winding through pebbly channels under bridges of many arches; crooked streets with ancient doorways; thoroughfares paved with white and bluish stones from the beach of the Mediterranean. These multicolored tidbits sketched over any omissions of more personal details in the letters that Jerome Pollock read with a lover's glower.

With the men she met in Nice, Sandra was equally particolored, like a bubble that may for a brief span float over every masculine head. Perce Dawes and his smart London relatives were there, in the palatial hotel on the Promenade des Anglais, and there were others to whom she was introduced by these new friends from time to time. Among them was Lord Hughie Rowson, reputed to have been chased by half the unmar-

ried women of the globe. Of course, Fan Lorikeet singled him out for Sandra. He was gay, agreeable, pliant, a capital companion for any matrimonial escapade, with youth, a champagne brand of ash-blond locks, and estates comprehensive as his lineage was long.

But Sandra just now was drifting.

Lord Hughie voiced a plaint over her elusory moods.

"You leave a chap to slip and slog," he accused her, on a day when they were motoring up the cornice road to dine somewhere in the Ligurian Hills, Perce Dawes at the wheel with Fan beside him, Lord Hughie preferring the tonneau and Sandra.

"I'm slipping headlong after you, silly tick that I am!" he laughed, watching molten hair blow out from under a faille-ribbon hat in the sunshine.

"If you're unsure of foot, I'm not to blame," said Sandra, nonchalant.

He twiddled his fingers.

"So what's a man to do but gambol on?" Which was about as far as any of his remarks carried him.

The village they were passing through was the scene of a *fête champêtre* and the incoming roads were enlivened by flower carts, donkeys, and people in holiday attire. A party of peasants had a gay salutation for their car, each young *paysanne* turning her head to give the men in the car a sight of her face.

"Quite fetching, don't you think?" remarked Lord Hughie, looking after the bevy.

As for Sandra, she found something new to look at every moment. Now a dark-eyed young Ligurian who boldly doffed his cap as he passed; now a worshiper kneeling at a hillside shrine; then an old flower vender, whose gray donkey had a rosette of rags and a bell or two between his ears, and about his shoulders a necklace of bells.

"Buy me a flower from his baskets!" exclaimed Sandra.

Perce Dawes heard the command, and stopped the machine.

"A rakish, wise-looking ass!" was Lord Hughie's comment on the donkey. "His ears are as long as his legs." He threw the vender a coin, laughing heartily over the avid reach of her scraggy arm.

The old flower woman, nutcracker face wreathed in smiles, stowed her gains in a bodice which still trembled under the pit-a-pat pace of her donkey, and offered the beautiful young lady a choice from her vivid saddle baskets.

Sandra's fingers hovered over the profusion of blooms. She sighed, selecting the most gorgeous.

"What a pity to see any woman so wrinkled!" said Fan, of the flower vender. "She looks old enough for death to have forgotten her!" In her jerky French, she asked the *vieille* her age, and was flurried to find her under the haM-century mark. "May I never grow old in this country!" she ejaculated.

"These women, y'see, wrinkle from toils and exposure," Lord Hughie explained, as if saying something rather serious.

Sandra threw a flower over Fan's shoulder.

"May our toils never be exposed," she murmured.

They laughed, and drove on.

Their road, leaving the fête vicinity by a devious and winding course, among hills terraced with vines and olive trees, found its romantic way to the inn which Dawes assured them served food well worth the climb.

They dined before long windows opened to the sunset. The viands were delicious—soup with Italian paste, little barbels in browned butter, vol-au-vent, jugged hare with a rich sauce of eggs, vinegar, and fresh butter, a vegetable, long lettuce, *omelette au sucre*, dry paste cheese, and coffee. The clink of glasses attested that the Lorikeet

girls had acquired the habit of drinking wines at dinner.

Dusk came, bringing a moon like a silver platter. The return spin was made down a road that unwound like a skein of white silk. They had glimpses of the Mediterranean, with its towers of the Middle Ages scattered all along the shore, and here and there sails on iridescent waters. The sea, the sails, the towers, the terraces of olive trees, were shut in and shut out by the hills, now disclosed and now concealed, in one form of beauty and another, until they were almost dizzy with the mere intoxication of so much moonlight and novelty.

Sandra's faille-ribbon hat blew out, petalwise, from her flushed face. She sat with her hands clasped about her knees, a slim length of silken ankle shimmering in the lunar light, a buckle on her shoe prismatic.

"D' you ever drift toward sentimentality in the moonshine?" Lord Hughie asked her, a bit headily.

She picked up a drooping flower from the seat.

"I'll put it in water," she said, "and till it fades I'll think of donkey bells." Her cadence atoned for any irrelevance in her words.

The car stopped before the inexpensive hostelry in which the Lorikeets had a rear suite.

"Such a jaunt to thank you for!" she said, giving Lord Hughie her hand.

He bared his head. His sleeked hair, regular features, waxen mustache, fair lashes, and very blue eyes emphasized the ingenuous smile he gave her.

She smiled back as candidly.

Then they stepped from the car to join Perce Dawes and Fan on the pebbled walk leading to the hotel.

At the portals, all of them shook hands, declaring that the dinner and ride must be repeated some time. The two men went back to the car. Fan and Sandra entered their temporary abode



in the high spirits that follow festivities which may have an undercurrent of more momentous trend.

"We're coming along," said Fan, congratulatory.

"Sumptuously," acknowledged Sandra, dropping the flower she had brought in.

#### CHAPTER IV.

"Sandra," said Fan, one day when they sat together near the fountain in the court garden of their hotel, "we're spending too much money."

"Are we?" Sandra was making a small paper skiff of a crested note that had come from Lord Hughie that morning. She set it sailing in the basin of the fountain, and watched it capsize and careen under the spray of the waterfall.

"I thought we could live more reasonably over here," continued Fan, plump hands busy with an embroidery needle and a sash she was hemming with metallic threads. "It didn't seem possible that anything could cost more than housekeeping!"

Sandra was contemplative.

"Everything always costs more than you expect it to."

Fan nodded.

"Also, my investments aren't going well. Poor papa always considered me eminently practical and able to take care of money. I suppose manipulating money is different." She threaded her needle with a copper strand, giving the task a good deal of attention. "Frankly, my dear," she added, hemming again, "the depletion of our funds is somewhat alarming!"

"You mean," said Sandra, after a minute of silence, "that we may have to turn and run at a crucial moment because of our inexperience in handling our affairs? That would be too bad, Fan." She reached out for the wrecked skiff and blew water drops from it.

Fan took exception to any hint of actual mismanagement.

"It won't come to that," she said, a trifle stiffly. "I merely meant that it might be well to speed up *your* affairs. Of course, Sandra, you understand that, while the handling of our income and daily expenditure rests on me, the future depends on you. You have a tendency to flirt even with fate, and you must take care that it doesn't delude both of us into waiting too long for our finale. You are plausibly beguiling, my dear, and one finds it hard to scold you into haste. We've been fortunate in meeting just the man for you this winter. Why don't you 'land' him, Sandra?" The copper strand ran in and out of the long sash.

Sandra's pointed fingers crumpled the skiff of paper and let it fall in a wet wad. She leaned against the high stone seat by the fountain and, saying nothing, let her eyes wander up a wall of many windows in an idle endeavor to locate the windows of their small suite. Failing to discover any individuality in the tiers of apertures, all curtained alike in not overclean lace of uniform pattern, she looked again at the pretty fountain, sending water high in the air to splash back into the greenish bowl where water lilies floated.

"It takes time to jar the consciousness of a man many women are after," she said at length. "One cannot leap at him."

"He's leaping after you," said Fan, combative.

"The very reason I shouldn't reverse." Sandra leaned forward a fraction to dabble her hand in the water. "Realize, Fan, we're not in our own home block. We're not dealing with neighbors who have known us all our lives. We're adventuring in new countries."

Fan bridled again.

"I'm sure no man could find fault with our breeding, nor with our introductions."



"Most of which have come through Perce Dawes," supplemented the younger voice.

"Why, his standing is unimpeachable!"

"Yes; but he's of the masculine gender. We have only a bowing acquaintance with his womenfolk. Of course," she added quickly, "this doesn't stamp us 'adventuresses.' But, remember, pleasure spots are full of many types. A young lord of creation versed in eluding our sex may have his scary moment concerning us. He must dally long enough to really know us." She was still trailing her perfect fingers in the fountain flow.

"Well," sighed Fan, "that's your part in this business, and I'll leave it to your intuitions. On my part, I'm really worried." She rolled the sash rapidly. "We're spending too much!" Her reiteration was emphasized by the way she drew and tied the silk cords of her embroidery bag. She sat inanimate, frowning in calculations that seemed actually to harass her normally adequate mind.

"*Ouvrage de longue haleine*—matrimony!" said Sandra. Then, with half a laugh, and in softer tones, "If we're cornered in our efforts to acquire much, Jerry's letters are as monotonously faithful as the pendulums of the clocks in his bookshop." She made a simple gesture.

Fan shook her head.

"It won't come to that!"

"It might come to worse."

"He isn't good enough for you!"

"He may be too good!" laughed Sandra.

"What a remark! Sometimes you talk such sense, and sometimes you talk such nonsense! Are you in love with Jerry Pollock? Only romanticism breeds such statements. 'Too good for you!' Bosh!" Fan reddened, snorting.

"Don't get angry," begged Sandra

ironically. "I'm in love with myself, as you know."

"Tish!" replied Fan, losing her temper for no very evident reason.

Sandra never quarreled, so they sat in silence for a time.

Perce Dawes came into the court garden, looking for them. He crossed the brightly paved place, swinging his stick as he came. He was a tall, well-set-up man, who walked with an easy air of owning everything in sight, and usually infused any surroundings with good fellowship.

The Lorikeets might have thrown off their slight moodiness had the intruder been an eligible and therefore sensitive to disconcerting impressions; Dawes, being out of the running as far as matrimony was concerned, was allowed the privilege of an unchanged atmosphere. Fan was peeved and tight-lipped; Sandra calm and exquisite.

Dawes took advantage of his position by noticing their expressions and asking Fan what was wrong.

"Your devotion to one another is quite a matter of comment," he added pleasantly.

Fan lost some of her aggravation, giving her shallow laugh and yielding immediately to the geniality he exhaled.

"We were wrangling over Sandra's suitors," she said, as if their number were legion.

He sat on the broad ledge of the fountain and stirred the water with his stick.

"Who's to be the lucky one?" he asked understandingly.

"I'm sure I don't know," replied Fan.

He looked at Sandra.

She lifted her eyes, rather on the defensive.

"It's a bother, isn't it?" he said of marriage.

Fan interjected judiciously.

"It depends. Of course, there are unions which had better been left un-

made. But an advantageous alliance is——" Her pause made no secret of who was in her mind.

He carried on the words, saying:

"He's a favorite cause for feminine wrangling. Have you ever heard of the wrangle over him about five years ago? He married a Gayety girl, and his people had the bother annulled. She did most of the wrangling!"

Fan was surprised.

"I didn't know that Lord Hughie had ever been married!" she ejaculated.

"Most of us have matrimonial skeletons in our closets," said Perce Dawes, turning his stick in the water and evidently thinking of the wife he had not taken the trouble to divorce.

"What a place the world is!" sighed Fan. "One is continually being disconcerted. Lord Hughie looks so young!" Her eyes strayed to Sandra's downcast face and wandered over its unblemished purity.

Perce Dawes was the first to speak again.

"I've a bit of news for both of you, which I hope you'll like."

He proceeded to tell them that he had persuaded his sister, Mrs. Oliver Chatham, who was with him in Nice, to open up her London house somewhat in advance of the season, and to include the Misses Lorikeet in a round-up that was to be jolly good fun. All sorts of nice people would be there, and if they especially desired it, he could angle in Lord Hughie.

He looked at Sandra, his glance asking what she thought of the proposed jollification.

She said nothing, eyes on the fountain.

Fan voiced a ready acceptance, hailing the prospect of a visit to London. Her delight, in which relief played a part, loosened her tongue. She declared his news providential, went so far as to air their finances—how much they had spent in Nice, despite the reason-

able hostelry he had directed them to, how improvident women were apt to be, and how she wished that this gathering under the auspices of Mrs. Oliver Chatham might bring about a culmination of her hopes for Cassandra.

"In unglamoured words," elucidated Sandra, cupping fountain water in her palms, "the dissension between Fanny and myself was really caused by a necessity for haste in marrying me off."

"I see," was what Perce Dawes said.

He did the sympathetic thing of extending a hand to each of them.

## CHAPTER V.

Fan and Sandra Lorikeet went to London.

As guests of Mrs. Oliver Chatham's house party, they had their first taste of life among ultrafashionables. Mrs. Chatham's guests, most of them, were people with money enough to do very much as they pleased; their tastes were broad, their friendships faddish, and their enmities might be quite fiendish.

Fan was in her element, luxuriating in the companionship of witty men and women and enjoying the greater luxury of showing Sandra off in circles which merited her charms.

Sandra was witty as *arf*, entirely placed, yet cognizant of her position among them as a girl with more looks than money. Cassandra knew well enough that when a poor beauty dares to preen before the triple mirrors of society, claws scratch at the quicksilver, people soon say things behind her lovely back.

It was murmured by Sandra's instantaneous enemies that she was merely a vainglorious nobody at the zenith of a surety which arose from achieving popularity no more substantial than a toy balloon. One fair guest hinted that Sandra's name was no weightier than her antecedents, which no one really had vouched for. Another whisper had

it that Perce Dawes had indulged in several arguments with his sister before she added the Lorikeets to her list of guests. Still another innuendo noised it about that Nice had been the scene of a rendezvous with Lord Hughie, who had followed the object of his volatile attentions Londonward. Also, house gossip tattled of the adoration Sandra was arousing in a clean young chap named Tomlinson, who had come in from one of the shires to flirt with the débutantes under Mrs. Chatham's wing.

Young Tomlinson was tumbling, polished heels over curly head, in love with Cassandra Lorikeet, from the States. He was just at the age to set up an idol, and Sandra, with her near-gold hair, slanting eyes, and chiseled perfection, seemed to him created for idolatry.

From his first sight of her, in the Chatham greeneries, he went daft over her. He followed her about like a big, devoted puppy, besought insignificant favors of her, was enthralled by the slightest of them, and turned glum by the barest slight. He was her stanch defender when tongues wagged against her. He had scant hope of ever winning so fair a creature, yet he was jealous of every man who came near her. And Lord Hughie's partial monopoly of her made him rage into the ear of any one who would listen to his raw anguish.

Perce Dawes teased Sandra about her latest conquest.

"Tomlinson Manor isn't palatial," he warned her. "Don't unduly encourage our young squire."

"He's a nice boy," murmured Sandra with half a sigh. "Nice enough to be in love with love, and almost lose sight of the woman."

"I haven't noted him losing sight of you," smiled Dawes.

"Oh, pray, do not make a note of every one who keeps me in sight!" shrugged Sandra. They were playing

billiards together, and she sent her ball with a cool, sidewise strike.

"Bully well done!" Dawes commended her shot.

They played for a few moments in silence, pitting their skill against each other. Both played cleverly. The click of the balls had the slight aggression of good opponents.

Dawes paused to turn his cue in his fingers, as Lord Hughie and a rather athletic girl—the Honorable Eunice Houghton—went by the billiard room. He said quizzingly:

"Young Tomlinson loses no more sight of you than Eunice lets slip any chance to gaze into his lordship's blue eyes. Have you noticed the triumph her stride evinces each time she bags a moment or two of him?"

Sandra laughed, poising her slim cue on her hand, eyes measuring her distance. It happened that she had observed the Honorable Eunice rather closely, and had dismissed her with a beauty's supreme shrug. Yet every woman knows what patience and dogged propinquity may accomplish! Sending her billiard ball to its socket, Sandra half suddenly made up her mind to cease dallying with the "great catch" and to throw herself into the chase for Lord Hughie with an abandon that would outspeed any less fleet-footed participants.

She straightened from her play to watch Dawes make his, subconsciously admiring his dexterity with ball and stick.

When Sandra began a chase to the finish, woe to the game she pursued! She could be as she had been in Nice—drifting, elusive, girlish. Or she could be as devilish a little wanton as ever breathed desire into a man's breast.

Young Tomlinson soon had reason to brood in the Chatham greeneries. For Sandra's delicious deviltries were aimed straight at Lord Hughie Rowson. And

Lord Hughie's reciprocity was alarming to all but the Lorikeets.

"Silly ticks that we are! Would we were wed!" jested Lord Hughie, one Sunday, when most of the house guests were at church listening to a bishop's discourse, and Hughie and Sandra were smoking in the sun parlor.

His impromptu remark, though not compromising, showed the way the wind was blowing.

Cassandra blew white moons of smoke, thinking of the vast Rowson estates and of herself niched and titled.

"Silly ticks that we are!" she mimicked, eyes long and limpid.

"Don't look at me so—or I may kiss you," he warned, rising in the sunlight. "And kisses on Sunday have such a religious flavor that they suggest a ceremony, and all that sort of thing." He came to the back of her chair, smiling down at her in his most ingenuous fashion.

"A cat may look at a king——" drawled Sandra.

He stooped and kissed her on the lips.

His declaration of honorable passion was imminent. A moment, and——

But the proposal did not come off—because, at this psychological instant, Perce Dawes happened to stroll into the sun parlor, looking for companionship on the quiet Sabbath morning.

"I hope I haven't broken up a tête-à-tête," said Dawes, helping himself to a cigarette.

Sandra lolled in her chair, watching Lord Hughie walk the length of the sun parlor.

She wished that she might feel sorry for the interruption, but she felt an incongruous sense of gratitude toward Dawes! Lord Hughie hadn't kissed her before. As she smoked in the sunlight, she remembered the kisses of Jerry Pollock. It couldn't hurt anybody concerned to put off Lord Hughie's declaration a bit longer. She'd bring it about

before the Chatham house party broke up.

She promised herself this, blowing smoke crescents from her adorable lips with a breath of self-contempt.

Lord Hughie left the sun parlor, and Sandra found herself smoking with Dawes.

## CHAPTER VI.

The Chatham festivities were swinging along, with the amiable nobleman glued to Sandra's white elbow and young Tomlinson moody, when there leaked up from the servants' quarters one of those house mishaps which the press chronicles with relish.

Lord Hughie's trinket case was missing.

His valet recounted the loss to one of the maids. The maid told a serving man. The serving man told the housekeeper. It reached the hostess and guests, chagrining Hughie, who would rather have mislaid his waxy mustache than become the center of anything hectic.

With the news of the missing trinkets, everybody set to questioning their maids and men. There was something of a hullabaloo. Stories were related of recent light fingers running through the West End. This led toward current scandals of any sort. Characters were tossed about like a handful of farthings; reputations were juggled by barbed tongues.

Lord Hughie twiddled expostulating fingers.

"Why all this chatter?" he complained.

"Afraid we'll unearth your sins, Hugh?" asked Eunice Houghton.

"Or the foibles of any one present?" laughed the fat Houghton dowager.

"Poor, trinketless Hugh is sulky!" scoffed young Tomlinson.

Perce Dawes turned to his sister.

"Isn't it permissible to jog Hughie out of his sulks?" he inquired. "We

owe him some fun for his discomfiture, eh?"

"Go ahead," was Mrs. Chatham's sportive rejoinder; as hostess, she welcomed any diversion from an unpleasant happening.

The agreeable Dawes put on his thinking cap. He appeared speedily to capture an idea, for he caught the general interest away from Hughie by announcing a travestied trinket search.

He explained the fun: they would go through all the dressing rooms in the house for the mere frolic of investigating rouge pots, receptacles for curls and toupees, complexion vials, letter and check cases——

"Prepare ye all for a rifling of your intimacies!" Dawes laughed and constituted Sandra Lorikeet and himself boudoir detectives.

Eunice caught up a handy pair of motor goggles.

"To shield my eyes," she explained.

"We're all in on the probe, y' know." Lord Hughie forgot his pouts for the new adventure. "Lead the way, Miss Sandra. Great little piece of splatterdash this!"

Tomlinson fell in step behind Sandra.

"Lead the way," he sighed gustily. "We'll follow you."

Sandra's eyes glinted over her shoulder to Lord Hughie.

"Follow me," she said with such insouciance that the one she spoke to giddily twirled his mustache and the one who had said he would follow her fell back a step and unhappily gnawed his downy lip.

The funmakers, led by Sandra and Dawes, ascended the huge hall staircase. At the upper chambers, the frolic began. It evolved into good sport. Each dressing table yielded up its secrets, its feminine implements of warfare inducing bursts of laughter and derision. Each check and letter case brought howls of protest from its owner. Each drawer

opened won its quota of merriment. The jollity was at its height when Sandra led them into her holy of holies.

Sandra Lorikeet betrayed no self-mercy in her boudoir.

She exposed each cream jar and waving iron, flaunted the fact that her brushes and mirrors were not gold-backed nor her bottles jewel-tipped, uncased a traveling clock which accompanied a small-change deposit, and opened for their inspection the drawer of her boudoir table.

"Even unto my ribbon-run fripperies——" she began, but she stopped short, staring down at a trinket case with the Rowson crest which lay in plain view among her ribbons and cambrics.

Every one else stared, too.

There was a moment of blank conjecture. *Lord Hughie's missing trinkets among Sandra Lorikeet's ribbons!*

Perce Dawes essayed to snap the boudoir drawer shut.

Sandra stopped him.

"Is it a joke some one has played on me?" she questioned, face frankly bewildered.

Lord Hughie, at one side of her, picked up his trinket case.

"By gad, it's mine!" he said limply.

Sandra put a pointed finger on the drawer.

"It's mine, by gad!" she echoed.

Eunice Houghton crossed to Lord Hughie. She put out a hand and touched the spring of the jewel case.

The lid flew up.

Each bauble was in its niche.

"At least, the joker who hid it here was not of criminal intent." It was young Tomlinson who spoke, as he stepped to Sandra's side.

Lord Hughie looked helpless.

"But, y' know," he said in distress, "this is most embarrassing!"

"For you, or for me?" queried Sandra, oblong eyes beginning to sparkle with anger.



"Prepare ye all for a scandal!" lisped a feminine funmaker.

"Lord Hughie's case in a boudoir!" said another.

"Or my fingers pilfering jewels from a case!" Sandra overtopped their audacity.

Lord Hughie fiercely plucked at his mustache.

"Who played this jejune jest?" he demanded.

Eunice regarded him in some pity.

"I'm afraid we *have* unearthed one of your follies, Hugh!"

"Oh, I say!" he protested, red to the roots of his ash-blond hair.

Eunice let her regard rest on Sandra.

"Or the foible of some one present," she paraphrased cruelly.

Sandra's eyes fairly flew to challenge Eunice.

"If the maiden who has lusted for the Rowson jewels is present, let her now speak or forever hold her tongue," she said.

Eunice, who moved in a set swift enough to bandy any sort of word, picked a syllable from Sandra's quick retort, employing it with a refinement of intonation and cool distaste that modified its crudity.

"Lust?" she laughed, looking at the boudoir table. "Oh, I beg of you, Miss Lorikeet!"

The silence which followed was full of a breathless listening. The ugly word stayed on, somehow, in the room.

Lord Hughie lamely closed the trinket case.

"What's all this smashing about?" he essayed. "No need to bark knuckles and bruise shins, Eunice! You know how I dislike an uproar!"

"But, my dear Hugh!" Eunice Houghton had stepped back to the feminine contingent and was speaking, it seemed, for them. "Do you realize that we can draw several inferences? And, in any event——" She looked at the women, who eagerly backed her, obvi-

ously agog for an indiscretion which might mean the ousting of Cassandra Lorikeet.

Young Tomlinson made a bluff effort to clear up the cloud descending upon Sandra.

He spoke honestly to Lord Hughie. "Have you any theory to advance on this 'joke?'"

"My dear Tomlinson," replied his lordship, "I'm not the theorist in the case. I'm the victim."

"Leave your part out of it!" cried the boy, at his best height beside Sandra. "Concern yourself with Miss Lorikeet's part!"

Lord Hughie cast his eyes upward.

"When have I merited being deviled by a cub?"

"Pax vobiscum!" Perce Dawes spoke for the first time. He was standing at the other side of the boudoir table, looking at the intimate objects there.

But young Tomlinson flung his hair back from his excited face. He turned impetuously to Sandra.

"We owe you an immediate apology for this," he declared. "Say you forgive our nastiness. You've come among us, danced with us, been good to us. Don't set us down as a lot of boars! And serpents! Our tusks and fangs seldom get a chance at an unblemished reputation like yours." He was flushed and breathless, very upstanding.

Lord Hughie couldn't help but laugh at Sandra's sponsor, with the freshness of the shires still in his cheeks. The laugh, mild though it was, dismissed Sandra's sex without respect.

Even young Tomlinson's ears grew red, and he seemed on the point of swinging an avenging, involuntary fist at Lord Hughie's receding chin. Sensing laughter in the very air, the boy faced all of them, standing in front of Sandra.

"You're beastly!" he said to them.

Lord Hughie expressed his distaste



for any impending scene by turning on a fastidious heel and carrying off his trinket case.

Eunice Houghton addressed the rest of the frolickers.

"Shall we go downstairs?"

They acceded. Uttering inanities, they withdrew from Sandra's boudoir. Their footsteps could be heard for a certain distance along the hall, and their cultured voices broke into a babel at some point on the stairs.

Young Tomlinson remained near Sandra, forgetful of the place, eager only to prove to her that she was above slander.

But, alone with her, he became somewhat abashed by the violence of his allegiance.

"I messed it," he stammered clumsily.

Sandra shook her head, closing the ribbon drawer.

"No, you didn't. You were nice."

He flushed up again.

"You'll be the talk of the house!" he said miserably.

"Never mind," she said, looking quite pale.

He plunged into an untimely avowal.

"You know I worship you! If they talk of this, let me shield you! Use me, all I have, anything I can say or do!"

Sandra held out her hand to him.

"I will." And she smiled.

"Thanks awfully!" He was breathless, jerky. "I'll send your sister up to you, if I may."

"If you will," she nodded.

His exit was blundering. He stumbled in going from her boudoir.

Alone, Cassandra half leaned against the closed drawer.

Her thoughts whirled. How could Lord Hughie's trinket case have come to be among her ribbons! The mischance, malicious or otherwise, might result in calumnies absurd, but possible to venomous tongues. She might be talked about as a lady with light fingers

—or morals! And the great *parti*, whom she had not brought to say the sealing word—— She could almost see his heels fleeing sensationalism!

She braced herself against the boudoir table, at the approach of feminine footsteps. It was Mrs. Chatham, who rapped on the panels of the open door.

"May I come in, my dear?"

Sandra replied calmly:

"Do!"

Her hostess, who bore a family resemblance to the genial Perce Dawes, entered with something of a rustle.

"Downstairs they are saying such a preposterous thing that I came up to have it confirmed or refuted." Her pleasant voice was perturbed. "Did they really find the trinkets in your room, my dear?"

"In here," said Sandra, opening her ribbon drawer.

Mrs. Chatham pursed her not ungenerous mouth.

"How inexplicable!"

"Isn't it?" said Sandra unevenly.

"Do have the occurrence investigated, Mrs. Chatham! My name seems to demand it."

"Oh, of course it shall be cleared up," her hostess hastened to assure her, yet with a certain stiffness which showed a leaning toward Eunice's clique. Sandra, backed against the mirrors, was just a trifle too fair for any woman's entire confidence.

Alone again, Cassandra rang for Ellie and had a warm bath drawn.

Fan came, from a bridge table somewhere in the big house, her scanty lashes standing out like a doll's.

"Sandra! What has happened?"

Sandra had to tell again how they had been on a play hunt for nothing but frolic, and had found Lord Hughie's trinkets here, in her room, among her ribbons.

Fan blanched.

"In your room? His jewels? Found in your room? Oh, my God, Sandra!"

Sandra was having Ellie dress her hair for dinner. She directed the placing of a gold bandeau before she assured Fan that their hostess had promised an investigation of the joke, if joke it was. Sandra was most particular about her hair this evening. And her choice of a frock was governed by her need to look her best. In golden tulle, with ribbons of blue and silver, scant sleeves of gold-thread lace, belt fixed low and at the waistline a cluster of golden grapes, she shone resplendent against Fan's dinner frock of dull tête de nègre.

It was not the time to look her daring best. What power had snowy shoulders and marvelous arms against the sweetly baneful glances of women primed for a dish of gossip? What defense was lustrous hair, a red mouth, and peerlessly poised head? Lord Hughie did not appear at dinner. Young Tomlinson was assiduous in his attentions. The end of a taut evening found Sandra having a word with Dawes on the hall staircase.

"Let me break the news gently," said Perce Dawes with a genial grimace. "The waxen Hughie has bade my sister adieu and slipped away."

Sandra's slight laugh belied a creeping pallor.

He watched the hardly perceptible change in her face. His hands reached out and held her shoulders.

"Gal, let him go!" he said. "Let 'em talk! What do you care?"

Her reply shrugged ivory shoulders from under his touch.

"*Après moi le déluge!*" she sighed. Then she put her hand on the balustrade. "How do you suppose the trinket case came to be there?" she asked.

"The suppositions they are making!" he deplored. Then he said gravely, "Just so there isn't any public scandal!"

"How could there be?" she exclaimed.

"Oh, there probably won't be!" he comforted. "There are always ways of slipping out in time. Take Lord Hughie's unnoised exit. A fabricated

excuse; a few words of regret; and any forthcoming shock evaded."

She looked at him, coppery eyes mirthful.

"What are you suggesting? Public disgrace? My graceful withdrawal from the fracas?"

He held up his hands, refuting any such pessimism.

Over the curve of her shoulder, as she started up the stairs, she said:

"Thanks for breaking the news so gently. Good night."

Dawes stood watching her ascent of the broad, polished flights—white flesh and cloth of gold, molten hair and flawless ankles.

Sandra found Fan pacing their rooms.

Fan's trivially arrogant pupils were actually green in the purplish tinge of her face. She had been under a strain all the evening. Now she was letting go.

"This trinket absurdity passes belief!" she said, enraged. "Mrs. Chat-ham not only failing to enthuse over the investigation due us, but reflecting a prevalent coolness, even doubt—of you! Tomlinson your defender! Dawes concerned! Lord Hughie absent from your side!" Fan was distraught.

Sandra sat on the hearthrug, put her chin on her shapely knees, and clasped her hands about her ankles.

"Lord Hughie has left," she told Fan.

Fan's mouth and eyes opened in a way that made her face resemble a full moon. A note of hysteria marked her utterance.

"Then this *is* a tragedy, Sandra!"

Sandra did not reply. Her laugh resembled the silvery crash of a mirror.

## CHAPTER VII.

Nobody knew how it happened. But Sandra Lorikeet's face adorned the sheet of a London daily the next morning, tagged by a brief description of Lord Hughie Rowson's famous trinkets,

their disappearance from the town house of Mrs. Oliver Chatham, their frolicsome recovery, and the rumors that had been afloat of an unannounced engagement between the charming lady of the photograph and his lordship.

"What inference are we to draw from this?" said Eunice Houghton, in the breakfast room while the paper was being passed from hand to hand, before the Lorikeets had come down.

Mrs. Chatham perused the travestied account of the incident in her house with real indignation.

"Who gave it out?" she wondered.

"Between ourselves," said the girl who lisped, "I fancy she quite likes this sort of advertising."

"I'm confident her sister likes any sort of puff that's given her," laughed the Houghton dowager.

Eunice sipped her coffee.

"No wonder Hugh evaporated! It is quite disgraceful, on the whole."

There was a lull in the talk as young Tomlinson stalked into the room, with the newspaper in his hand. Some one had shown him Sandra's photograph there before breakfast. He was furious. He wanted to hurl maledictions at anybody, to have the tale hushed up by drastic measures.

"Oh, for lawk's sake, don't have another rumpus!" protested Mrs. Chatham.

She took the paper from Tomlinson.

"If you don't behave yourself, young man, I'm going to shoo you away. Haven't you ever seen dark eyes and golden hair before?"

"Take a Gaiety course, Squire Tomlinson," laughed Perce Dawes, folding the paper at Sandra's plate.

The Lorikeets came down to the breakfast table.

Sandra, unconscious of the culminating sensation, spooned her grapefruit.

Young Tomlinson reached for the paper by her plate.

"You don't want this," he said audibly.

She caught the tension in the atmosphere, glanced at what he asked for, and saw her pictured face and the heading: "Trinkets Cause Tempest in Chatham Teapot."

Without changing color, she handed the paper to young Tomlinson.

He stuffed it into his pocket.

Fan was chatting to Dawes, who sat next to her. A night's rest had eased her nerves. She was inclined to belittle any current animosity. She sensed nothing of the new upheaval.

Breakfast passed off rather brilliantly for Sandra. She matched every tongue readily, even dispatching a studied avoidance of the topic in mind by discussing the trinket mystery and voicing witty surmises as to the identity of the guilty joker who had driven away Lord Hughie and terminated the fun of the mock search.

Tomlinson flagged Sandra's heels when she left the breakfast room.

"Come to the greeneries," he begged her.

She accompanied the tall youth to the shady seclusion of the conservatories. There, she asked for the newspaper in his pocket, read a moment's output of some enterprising newsmonger, began to tear downward strips in the sheet that gave London a chance to regale itself at breakfast with her face. The photograph had apparently been run off from one that adorned her boudoir table. She was puzzled; conscious of a slow, consuming anger against the perpetrator of this added affront.

Tomlinson took the obnoxious journal from her hand.

"Pretty rotten work!" he said.

She nodded. There flashed into her mind an odd fear that the trinket item might be embodied in the column of some London correspondent on a New York paper. She thought of Jerry Pollock breakfasting over a tawdry reproduction of her features allied with a silly story.

Young Tomlinson was talking.

She realized suddenly that he was asking her to accept his hand at once, to right herself in every one's eyes by saying they had been engaged in secret for several weeks, to laugh at the idea of there having been anything between herself and Lord Hughie, to take him, Tomlinson, and protect herself with his substantial name.

Flushed and a little heroic, he offered to marry her immediately.

Sandra put out a hand to stop him. This overready proposal of marriage from this overyoung suitor showed her with painful clarity how complete her collapse in the Chatham set.

"Why do you stupidly choose sides with the vanquished?" she chided him. "You should know better."

"I love the vanquished!" was his sturdy argument.

"Oh, but you mustn't!" She put her hand on his arm. "Love is too rare a thing to waste."

He straightened under the light touch.

"You're a rare thing, aren't you?"

Her eyes sought the newspaper at their feet.

"Rather a common thing, it seems."

He kicked at the paper.

"Beasts!" he muttered. He turned back to her, filling their nook of the greenery with a gust of something so nearly like the immortal passion that it elevated him at once from puppydom. "Marry me, and shut all their mouths," he said.

The touch of her hand on his arm was a caress, and in her eyes was something that she might not have let any but this stripling see—a flicker of far-away dreaminess, a fleck of desolation.

"Why do you wish to shield me?" she asked him.

"I care," he half sobbed.

"For me? So much?"

He bent his head to her hand.

"Oh, Sandra, so much!"

She touched his head with her free

hand, the flicker dying in her eyes, leaving them the color of leaf mold. Her rejection of him was voiced with an unwanted humility.

"Go home to your shire, and forget," she ended with finality.

He lifted his head; the mark of a ring she wore was on his forehead, a tiny red design that would fade and leave no scar.

"Please kiss me," he said. "Give me that much to remember."

Sandra kissed him and went quickly from the greeneries.

Young Tomlinson left that day, after telling Mrs. Chatham that Sandra had refused him. This second departure within twenty-four hours was the beginning of a general trend toward evacuation.

Publicity is often a magic wand for dispersing any gathering of people averse to having their names in print. Or the campaign of departure might have been instigated by a well-bred desire to hasten the exit of the captivating heroine of a morning edition! The Lorikeets, naturally, could not wish to be among the last to leave. So Sandra, during the day, concocted relatives visiting London and made their entertaining the requisite excuse. And Fan, by strategic telephoning and a conference with Perce Dawes, who had the city at his finger's end, secured a temporary dwelling place suited to their means.

"What are our means just now, Fanny?" asked Sandra, while Ellie was packing.

Fan's laugh crescendoed nervously.

"Cloudy?" queried Sandra.

"Very," stated Fan. She explained where a good deal of money had gone. "For your clothes. You needed so much to come here."

"And I'm going away from here with my clothes almost torn from my back!" said the beauty, watching Ellie fill the upper trays of a trunk.

Fan planned the immediate future.

"We'll live reasonably for a while. Dawes says these won't be smart lodgings, but the house is presided over by a most reputable vicar's widow. We'll retrench, and advance again."

"Is it worth it?" asked Sandra, noticing, as Ellie cleared the boudoir table, that her photograph was missing.

"Look around those rooms, and at yourself in them," was Fan's rejoinder. Her confidence in Sandra's right to a brilliant marriage was still unshaken.

Ellie finally locked the last trunk and went down to arrange for a taxicab. Before dinner, the fabrication about relatives having come to London was faultlessly enacted. Their hostess expressed the usual regrets.

The Lorikeets' withdrawal from the Chatham residence passed off punctiliously.

#### CHAPTER VIII.

In their luggage-piled cab, with Fan making some sort of calculations with a pencil and Ellie submerged by hatboxes, Sandra watched the shifting crowds in Regent Street and Piccadilly—mendicants and smartly toggled loiterers, monogrammed cars flashing along and drays going at a snail's pace, people with an assured tread and others with the shy gait of the unfortunate; all moving on in a weak solution of sunshine.

Sandra wondered, as their cab progressed despite the traffic, just where Fan and she were traveling in this cross section of their life!

The vehicle finally slowed in a deep street which had known proud days, but whose gables, dormer windows, balconies, and stately doorways had all grown shabby. It was in the vicinity of a great market. Carts from the country were in evidence, loaded with cabbages, carrots, and turnips; there were pushcarts piled with fish of iridescent colors, and the call of the fish merchants rang over the noises of hoofs and motor trucks and hurrying feet.

The cab stopped before a tall, dreary house. The hall they entered, narrow and high, with a round window through which could be seen gray roofs and yellow chimneys, gave out vagrant odors of tea and hymnals. The vicar's relic was a lady who wore meekness as she wore her frock, grayish black, with frillings at neck and wrists. The rooms adapted to their retrenchment were on an upper floor. They were papered in oatmeal tints, furnished in watered oak, curtained in buff, carpeted in Brussels weave of greens, reds, and yellows. They had high ceilings and low fireplaces. The pictures were hung at stated intervals from white-knobbed nails.

"This certainly isn't 'smart,'" said Fan, when the door had closed them in. She sent Ellie off for tea and crumpets, housekeeping of the lightest sort being permissible. "At any rate," she added with her surface laugh, "we can't spend much money here. And it won't be utterly dull; Dawes has promised to look us up."

Sandra made no comment on Dawes' promise.

She opened a case of writing materials, put back the top of an inkwell, and placed the writing pad on her knees. In her last letter to Jerry Pollock, she had sketched the personnel of the Chatham gathering. Now, her fluent chirography informed Jerry that she and Fan had taken quarters in London, shed a few friends, and noted that the crowds in Piccadilly and Fifth Avenue were very much the same—hordes of fagged, homeless faces, in a panorama always swift and gay.

The episode which had rudely thrust the Lorikeets out of their element left Sandra very much like one of the beautiful, iridescent fish in the markets. She had been nourished for seasons of gaiety and change on the admiration which alone renders feminine existence tol-



erable. In this arid place they had come to, she had a sense of being jerked from her natural atmosphere and being unjustly stifled.

Fan's activities applied themselves to a practical expenditure of this retrenching time; to saving money at every turn, to overhauling their wardrobe and hiring a sewing machine, going out with batches of gloves to be cleaned, coming in with renovated raiment. Her optimism even evinced itself in brightening the drab sitting room, moving the tea table to a more advantageous position, taking down a framed biblical motto, bordering the curtains with some blue stuff, and recovering all the cushions with silk from their trunks.

"Perce Dawes promised to look us up," was her explanation of the refurbished sitting room.

Sandra elevated her eyebrows.

"You may entertain him, Fanny, if he does come." Her intonation held a shade of scorn for both the makeshifts and their inspiration.

"Fiddlesticks!" replied Fan, setting out their own handsome tea service. "Men don't dislike this sort of thing, my dear."

"I dislike it," said Sandra frigidly.

"Of course you do, babe. That's why you mustn't let your face grow the least bit colorless, as 'your face is your fortune, my pretty maid!'" The plump hands laid out the sugar tongs and lemon salver. "And you must be civil to Mr. Dawes, when he calls. He's been so civil to us. And, Sandra, if worst comes to worst—" Fan pursed her lips with one of her expressive lapses.

"No wonder you can't finish out your remark," laughed Sandra, color higher. "Aren't you ashamed, sis? Dawes isn't unattached, you know."

Fan's face became florid. She picked up a Sèvres cup and placed it on its saucer again.

"He could become so," she said in

refutation of any undue machinations. "They say his wife ran off with a Venetian artist. Divorce papers are easily indited nowadays." She spoke with some shortening of breath, moving toward the inner rooms and not looking at anything in particular.

"Be careful of your step," warned Sandra, eying the well-corseted back of her elder. "Shoddy places make ethical traps! Don't trip, Fan."

Sandra's glance drifted beyond the living room, to the gloom of a sleeping chamber embellished with a single bed of double width, a bureau with an uncertain mirror, and a curtained aperture for Ellie.

Fan had no reply for Sandra's laconic admonition, as she changed her house frock for street attire. She went to the market each day with Ellie, selecting delectable tidbits of food for Sandra's appetite, which was variable sometimes.

In a few minutes, brisk and fashionable in camel's-hair cape and low-crowned turban, with chamois gloves and trig shoes, Fan came through the front room with Ellie, who carried the small market basket.

"Don't be lonesome while I'm gone." Fan patted her sister's graceful shoulder. "I have an errand or two besides the marketing. Shall I bring you some magazines or candy?"

"No," answered Sandra, turning her head away and closing her eyes.

She was stretched on an antique sofa twice the length of her, upholstered in dingy silk and with a high wooden back. She was doing nothing and had nothing to think about. Even her last letter to Jerry Pollock hadn't been answered, and she had found Fan's last remarks uninteresting. When the tireless footsteps of her sister had departed, she opened her eyes and looked at the ceiling.

It was a particularly ugly ceiling, one or two cracks running over it, while



countless hair lines defaced the smoky corners. It was like a forehead on which each lodger had left a line of care. It had roofed, perhaps, many cold and discouraged women, hungry women, poorly dressed women, women to whom evil might be near and women to whom evil was a familiar foe. Sandra lay looking at the ceiling, eyes dusky below the shimmer of her hair and above the red twist of her mouth.

Toward the luncheon hour, the house drudge put her head in at the door.

"'Er sez you 'ave a wisitor, miss—a gentleman. Will you 'ave 'im up?"

Sandra scrambled into a sitting posture. Perce Dawes came into her mind, in calling attire!

"Come in and earn a shilling by putting on the teakettle and making some sandwiches," she bade the menial. She went to the inner rooms, pulling the pins from her hair and throwing them wide with a gesture of involuntary pleasure.

With the teakettle singing and a plate of lettuce sandwiches beside it, the sitting room wasn't so altogether impossible. Sandra stood by one of the windows, waiting for the maid to usher Dawes up flights of unsmart stairs. She could almost feel the caller's sympathetic sniffs on the landings.

But the man who came in wasn't the one in her thoughts.

Jerome Pollock was crossing the room to her.

She went to meet him.

"Why—Jerry!"

He met her halfway.

"Sandra! Cassandra!"

Her hands were in his.

"Whatever made you think of coming?"

"If you could cross the ocean, so could I!" he cried ardently.

She drew back, an ironical glance on the room. "Don't snatch me from under the nose of European society!"

He laughed. Looking at her as if he might never stop, he drew her to the nearest seat, the old-fashioned sofa. He sat beside her, eyes on hers.

Sandra looked at him almost as avidly.

"So this is why you haven't answered my last letter. You were coming!"

He still had her hands.

"I came because of——"

She interrupted.

"Because of a word I used in my last letter?"

"A word?" His eyes were on her hands.

"Homeless," she said.

She was meditative.

"Sometimes one does long for a familiar street or face," she continued. "I hope my missive wasn't sentimental." She raised humid eyes to his, while her mouth remained ironic.

He took her face in his hands.

"This is the face I've longed for," he said. "Not sometimes—all of the time!"

She touched his cheek with a responsive finger.

"This is the one most apt to make me sentimental."

"Tell me you're glad to see me, Sandra." To prolong such rapture, he held off the coming kiss. And, then, because her lips invited instant kissing, he delayed no longer.

Breathless, each looked at the other, then drew away.

He rose and walked to a window, and stood there looking at nothing.

"This is like a dream," he said without turning. "You! After all these months!"

She put her head against the high back of the sofa. Color was flooding her face, her eyes were bright, her lips palpitant. She waited for him to speak again.

He looked out at the roofs, league on league of impersonal housetops, some flat, some peaked. He turned and came

to her, as if to kneel before her. His dreamy, idyllic face was afire.

"Marry me, Cassandra. Come back with me!"

She allowed herself a visionary second, then shook her head. Her glance slipped from his.

"Why have you come?" she demurred. "Could you not drift any longer? You had my letters, Jerry?"

"I want you!" said Jerome.

"*Vous êtes entêté,*" she said, paling.

He sat by her again.

"I am going to be obstinate this time."

He looked about the room, at the table with tea and sandwiches, at the buff window curtains watered with blue. "This business of flitting about the globe has got to stop. I love you! I want to roof you. Where's Fan?"

She bent forward, coaxing him.

"Don't let's argue, Jerry."

But his kiss this time was brief.

He held her in his arms as if he intended to pillow her there definitely.

"I'll not let you go till I've had an answer. Will you marry me? Or won't you? Your letters have said nothing. You're a trifter."

"*Fi donc, libraire!*" she retorted faintly. After a moment, "Let me sit at the far end of the sofa and think, neighbor."

He picked her up in his arms and carried her the length of the dingy silk upholstery. He set her own, returning to his end and folding his arms.

Cassandra did some thinking in this wise:

The game for the great *parti* was not working out as well as it might, yet it had its fascinations. There had been exhilaration in chasing Lord Hughie, drama in the twist by which she had lost sight of him. To-morrow or next month or year, he might come back into her life, and the chase would once more be on! There were others, like young Tomlinson—vanity feeders! And there was Perce Dawes, who might be brought

to make himself eligible if one cared to cross wits with so experienced an opponent. Wealthy as Lord Hughie, older, more of a match for her mind was Dawes.

Her very uncertainty in all directions of this uncommendable, ancient game had its lure. Married to Jerry Pollock, all uncertainty would cease. She would be secure, settled. Her thoughts became for the second dreamy. Jerry, to kiss and play with all her life! Existence a serene and joyous thing with Jerry! Pillowed in Jerry's arms—life with Jerry—love with Jerry! She gave herself over to a tide of exquisite sensations which stilled while they quickened her pulses, lulled any unease or apprehensions or restive fever, and thrilled her with an abounding sense of sheer youth and happiness. Yet—Why, even this hideous room had the charm of novelty, of impending change, of portending conquests, of defeats turned into triumphs, of dangerous play and exciting hazards!

She rose and went to Jerry.

"My dearest man," she said, low-voiced, "you are in love with a woman who is one of love's gamblers." She made a gesture of finality.

Jerry wanted his ultimatum clearer.

"Is it yes or no, Sandra?"

She lifted expressive eyes.

"Must I say it?"

"You must," he answered passionately.

She opened her lips, but did not speak.

He waited.

At length she said, stretching her arms and sighing:

"Life calls me so!"

"You mean—no?"

Her fingers flew out to him, clung to his, protesting. "Could I mean that—to you?"

"Then what *do* you mean? Yes?"

She shook her head.

"I fear I have no meanings in this unharbored heart of mine."

Honeyed pathos did not satisfy him.

"You have meanings you do not care to expose!" he flung at her. He did not mince his words.

"You're after big game, while you keep me dangling! You don't care much what you *do*, just so you get what you *want*." His look included the shoddy room, as he took a newspaper clipping from his bill fold and laid it on the sofa. "I did not come because of the word 'homeless' in your last letter. I came because I received this newspaper excerpt in my mail. I thought it time to come!"

She put her hand on the back of the sofa, staring down at the clipping: "Trinkets Cause Tempest in Chatham Teapot," and at the crude print of her face.

"You received this in your mail, Jerry? Some one sent it to you?"

"Yes. Did you send it?"

"I? Why, no!"

His quick look doubted her veracity. Hurt, she cried out:

"I didn't send it! Jerry, do you doubt my word?"

"Have I had reason to always credit it, Sandra?"

She made a passionate gesture. Her face was scarlet.

"But to imagine me capable of sending you the only riffraff my life has caught so far!" The color in her face ran higher.

"But who else could have mailed it?" he asked, softened.

"I don't know. I don't care! There are always busybodies, false friends. A man and woman should trust each other—in the main. Oh, there may be evasions, mistakes, fallacies, faults. But when it comes to vulgarity and——" Her eyes glinted with tears. She put intolerant fingers over them.

He was silent for a moment.

Then he said:

"What do you want me to do? Go back? Dream? Believe? Grow into middle age, be invited to your wedding with another man? Go on loving you, in spite of everything—in my house where children should be playing and a wife should be at my table? Go on wanting you, Sandra, and not having you? You, who make all other women seem to me like mere shadows!" Face working, his hands groped and found her, took her shoulders in a grip which made her seem fragile as alabaster. "What do you think I'm made of?"

"Jerry, let me go!"

"Tell me you love me, Sandra!"

"I——"

"You do! Your eyes, your lips, brim with love for me! But you're a cheat! A fraud! Mercenary! Merciless!"

"Jerry, you hurt me! Your arms! Let me go!"

"You've—hurt—me!" He gave her palpitant lips a kiss which halved the hurt.

Then he thrust her away as if he were through with her, and as if he could never be through with her!

She stood looking at him, fingers a latticework before the lips he had bruised.

"Will you marry me and come back with me, Sandra?"

She would not reply.

He picked up his hat.

Sandra had no consciousness of stepping forward to waylay him.

Somehow, she was closer to him. He was dumbly kissing her eyes down until the lashes lay flat against her cheeks. She tilted her face, drawing every atom of delight from the caress. Then, in some way, she released herself and put space between them.

She flung herself, face down, on the long sofa, hiding her eyes on her arms. There was an opening and closing of the door.

Jerry was gone!

## CHAPTER IX.

A week after Jerome Pollock had come and gone, Perce Dawes knocked at the Lorikeets' flat without the formality of having himself announced.

The moment was inauspicious. Fan had the sitting room cluttered with fashion patterns and tulle. After greeting Dawes with fluttered cordiality, she disappeared, bearing off an armful of illusion.

"You're quite cozy up here," said Dawes to Sandra. He cleared a chair of tissue-paper patterns, hung his stick over the back of it and his hat on his stick. He took the chair, regarding her with a geniality that fairly overflowed the place.

"How are things coming along?" he asked with the prerogative of a confidant.

"Sumptuously," said Sandra, from the cushions of the window seat.

He gave his ready laugh.

"That's a word few people apply to life in these days; I wish I'd come sooner. Please lavish some of this rich contentment on me, as a reward for my climbing your stairs."

"Were they so steep?" she asked, coloring.

"Not very," he comforted.

Fan came back with some sewing in her hands.

"Every other day I've had this room neat as a pin," she lamented, sitting on the sofa. "Why do you men always come when least expected?"

"Sorry," said Dawes easily.

"But we're glad to see you, anyhow," Fan assured him with genuine hospitality. "We've been dull as two mops out of dishwater. Taking a sort of rest cure, spending no money, and seeing none of our friends—and enduring a generally prosaic time." Her busy fingers were running tiny tulle ruffles for a scant bodice. "Do gratify our curiosity about one thing. Did the miscre-

ant connected with that trinket scare ever come to light?" She tagged her monologue with the question, thus burying it in words.

Dawes watched the ruffles pucker into place.

"Those flumdums are works of art to the masculine mind," he declared. "How *do* you take such invisible stitches?"

"Practice makes perfect," laughed Fan, flattered.

Sandra spoke.

"About the trinkets——"

He turned to her.

"Nary a trace of the culprit. It was unfortunate that there was public scandal."

"Unfortunate!" emphasized Fan grimly.

"What's become of Lord Hughie?" inquired Sandra, after a moment.

Dawes grimaced.

"Why, the Houghtons carried him off for a summer in Switzerland." He settled in his chair, pulling his stick over the back and folding his hands on it. "I've a budget of news, if you care to hear it."

"Fire away," said Fan, mollified by the way he took it for granted that the news of his world would be their news.

Dawes, who could be delightfully entertaining, began to regale them with reports of intrigues in circulation, elopements, affairs of the heart less naïve, separate maintenances and financial scandals; all in a wealth of ludicrous detail. The atmosphere of the unfashionable room was changed by an inflow of smart personalities. In half an hour, the tulle ruffles had been laid aside, and Sandra was laughing as she had not done for weeks. Fan made tea. Time flew. They talked of the season's styles in clothes, the latest books and plays, politics, the tittle-tattle of a mammoth and fascinating town.

Their caller finally rose, with his customary hand for each. If he had crossed

London to divert them, he had fulfilled his mission. Fan was flushed, Sandra sheerly brilliant. He won from them a promise to go to the Alhambra with him the next evening. His leave-taking was buoyant and anticipative.

When he was gone, Sandra executed a slow dance step.

"What shall I wear to-morrow night?" she asked, cogitating.

Fan's heightened spirits made her inclined to be roguish.

"Remember—you are not dressing for a marriageable man!"

"*Ciel!* An entertaining man, which is better!" The lithe figure waltzed to a rear room, stood inanimate for a moment before the time-dimmed mirror, turned away—sharply. Sandra's contralto fluted mirthlessly through the rooms:

"The past is dead—

"Twere better far had we not met!"

The evening at the Alhambra was followed by a luncheon with Dawes in a popular restaurant in Jermyn Street. And within the course of a few weeks, Fan and Sandra Lorikeet were careening about London with Perce Dawes. Fan, having her fling at this sort of chaperoning, was not keenly alive to the indiscretion of Sandra's appearing from nowhere in the theaters, clubs, and dancing places, always escorted by the man who had introduced them to Mrs. Chatham's elect circle, and who was not an *épouseur*. Sandra, cognizant that sometimes significant shrugs followed the Lorikeets' nocturnal, though innocent, excursions about town with Dawes, did not care what any one might think.

One evening, at the Café Monica, Dawes warned them that he had something lamentable to tell them.

"Who do you think are going to splice up?" he said. He continued equably, "None other than Eunice Houghton and Lord Hughie. It was announced at a dinner dance last week." He passed cigarettes to Sandra, who accepted a

weed and examined it as if its composition interested her. "Eunice chased him down in Switzerland," he informed them. "Every one says that his people have had an eye on Eunice since the speedy annulment of Hughie's marriage with a Gaiety girl. A natural match; the Rowson-Houghton nuptials. Wonder how they'll strike it off."

Sandra lighted her cigarette.

Fan lifted a glass of water to her lips, saying:

"Miss Houghton is more of an athletic type than Lord Hughie. Such a pity when the bride is brawnier than the groom!" The ice clinked in her water goblet.

Dawes spoke agreeably.

"In Nice, and at my sister's, we half fancied chasing him down, ourselves." His laugh modified the impudence.

Sandra's eyes came up gayly.

"Nice was such a fanciful place!"

"Wasn't it?" His tone became reminiscent. "I often think of our old flower vender of the Ligurian Hills, the belled donkey and the blooms of the saddle baskets. Didn't we have a good dinner that evening?"

"Sumptuous." She twiddled tapering fingers.

"But no better than this dinner," said Fan, giving Dawes a surface smile. "I like the English cookery; hearty, yet flavorful. It's a curious thing how each nation has its individual cooking. Now, at home——" Fan began to talk of the cafés in New York, the inns of the Adirondacks, the hostleries of Palm Beach.

Cassandra listened to Fan with an element of curiosity, an ingredient of sophistry. She wondered with merely a crystallization of her spirits, if the Lorikeet frontage was beginning to evince a shade of the social aggression which heralds vulgarity.

Her musing look focused on the tilt turban of variegated feathers which Fan was sporting with her sables.



## CHAPTER X.

Sandra let her sister do most of the talking that evening in the Café Monica. Her mind was on the news of the evening, Lord Hughie's engagement to Eunice Houghton, and the way Perce Dawes had imparted it. She had detected malevolence in his reference to Nice and a note of rejoicing over the frustration of the Lorikeet ambitions. Was it that Dawes was mean enough to enjoy another's misfortune? Or—the supposition was more titillating—was he glad to count Lord Hughie out of the running? She found this thought intriguing. It cast her into a very furnace of meditation concerning this "ineligible" with whom she was drinking so many cups of tea.

Fan's tongue ran on after they had said good night to their escort at the door of their transient domicile.

"So you actually lost Lord Hughie through that unriddled trinket fatal-ity and the publicity given it!"

Sandra abstractedly took off her Etruscan hat, bobbed with cherries, and tossed it aside.

"Dawes wasn't loath to tell us of our loss. He went pretty far, I think, in mentioning our conference in the garden at Nice." She drew off her long mousquetaire gloves.

Fan put the cherry-bobbed hat into its proper oiled-paper case.

"Dawes meant nothing offensive," she was quick to say. "He is the one real friend we've made here."

"Dawes has a devotee in you, Fanny." Sandra was already unhooking the girdle that confined her slight figure and stepping out of scant petticoat of satin and lace.

"He has," laughed Fan with an unconscious note of affection.

"He has?" quizzed Sandra, looking at her older sister with recurrent curiosity.

"He is one of the most loyal men I've

ever known," explained Fan, pulling out the fingers of the shoulder-length gloves. "He stood by us when his sister practically made it impossible for us to remain in her house. He kept his promise to look us up here. He has made us almost forget our reverses!" Picking up the cobweb petticoat and delicate girdle, Fan added vehemently, "Dawes is the one man I could hand you over to with entire satisfaction."

Sandra laid her head on her pillow.

"He's the one man I'd fear to hand myself over to."

"Why?" asked Fan, surprised.

"There's something too disarming about him," Sandra murmured.

"Why should that make you fear him?" Fan was methodically disrobing. "You're charming enough to induce him easily to free himself of any incumbrance—meaning his obnoxious wife," she added, a bit tartly.

Sandra laughed mirthlessly.

"Take care, Fanny! Devotees easily go blind!"

"Any woman could go blind about such a man!" was Fan's unexpected response. "She took possession of her side of the bed, plumping her pillows for a talk. 'Did you notice how he spoke of Nice? How he remembered little details of our dinner in the Ligurian Hills, the belled donkey, and the old flower vender he stopped the car for, when you wanted a posy?'"

"I'm sleepy," said Sandra, yawning. She turned to the other side of the bed and flung an arm over her eyes.

Fan put out a reluctant, plump hand and turned off the light. Sandra had cut the talk short. But neither of the Lorikeet girls went to sleep very soon in the room whose window opened toward the market place and fish stalls.

Less than a fortnight after this, Fan's platonic passion for their loyal friend Dawes received one of those jolts which devotees generally experience. To relieve the tedium of some hook-and-eye



shopping in Bond Street, Fan had dropped in at the Yellow Aster Tea Room for scones and Ceylon. A group including Lord Hughie and his fiancée, Perce Dawes and his sister, were at the next table.

Fan bowed to them.

They made no sign of recognition.

She caught the eye of Dawes, and found it blank as a wall. Dawes—the best friend they'd made in London—simply overlooked Fan Lorikeet, making some trivial remark to his sister in the moment.

Fan finished her scones and tea, leaving the place without apparent haste. She bought no more notions. In the tramcar that bore her to the section of London recommended by Dawes for gentlewomen under a cloud, Fan sat as if a ramrod had been thrust down her modish back. In her sitting room, she rid herself of her parcels, unfastened her camel's-hair cape—and began to tremble noticeably.

"I—think I have a chill, my dear," she said to Sandra.

She had Ellie bring her a thimble glass of cordial.

"This climate is trying," she said, tight-lipped. Then, abruptly, "What do you say to going back to New York, babe?"

Sandra stared.

"We could winter at one of the smaller hotels there," shivered Fan. "Ellie is leaving us for a smarter situation this noon, you know. And this climate is neuralgic!" Nervously tipping the last ruby drop from the wine-glass, she asked, "Have you written regularly to Jerry Pollock, Sandra? I haven't noticed any letters from him lately."

Sandra, level-eyed, colorless, swung a slim foot.

"To let you in on a secret—Jerry has come, and gone."

"What?" Fan fairly snapped the

word, leaning forward to place the wine-glass on the table.

"He came one day when you were at the market." This, in musical, drifting words. "We kissed—and quarreled. He called me names and went away." Refilling the cordial glass, she went on quietly: "Now tell me your secret, Fanny. What has happened?"

Fan recounted the snub she had received in the Yellow Aster.

"I bowed to them!" she said tragically.

"They may not have seen you," soothed Sandra.

"Dawes saw me plainly!"

"Then," said Sandra, her eyes the color of the cordial, "we must call his friendship by a less pretty name."

"What do you mean?" Fan batted her lashes. "Dawes considers us titmice? Nincompoops? He's false?"

Sandra nodded.

Fan eased her feet, one on the other.

"He's in love with you," she hazarded.

"In a way," replied Sandra coolly.

"In the one way, Sandra."

"In one of the ways, Fanny."

Fan rose, and sat down again. The room was warm. She removed her toque and pushed moist waves of hair from her forehead.

"What a world it is!" she said chokily.

"Why care?" shrugged Sandra, going to the window and looking down at the street.

It had been raining the night before and the gutters were muddy. The sidewalk nearer the markets was littered with wet shells of snails and lobsters. A market woman was feeding bits of fish to three enthusiastic street cats. Sandra said:

"How are we off for money, Fan?"

"Wretchedly!" The word was an explosive.

"Haven't we saved money by cooping ourselves in this place?"

"Yes. But some of my returns from

home have been far smaller than I expected. And we seem always to spend money!"

Sandra watched the confusion and tumult of the narrow, twisted streets around the markets; there was more mud there, as well as the work of buying and selling necessary food; the world of people who bought and sold more pleasant commodities seemed far away. Eyes down, Sandra made trceries on the defaced window sill with her marriage finger.

A slight sound in the aperture beyond the rear room made her look up.

Ellie was hasping her satchel and putting on her hat.

Rather abstractedly, Sandra looked at the maid who had shampooed and frocked her since her debut and who was now leaving for smarter surroundings. Ellie had dressed the molten hair with discretion for a suitor whose chief asset was love and had piled it extravagantly for the great *parti*; had heard nocturnal confabs which laid bare every triumph and defeat in the game of pursuit, and witnessed each privation suffered for the coveted gain. She watched Ellie put the pins in her hat and draw on neat lisle gloves.

Across the dingy, old-fashioned rooms, the eyes of mistress and maid met.

Ellie came into the living room, looking at the beautiful young lady she had served for a number of years. She stood in the center of the room, satchel in hand.

"What is it, Ellie?" asked Sandra. "Do we owe you anything?"

"No, Miss Sandra." Ellie spoke with a shade more than her usual civility.

"Are you going now? You have your recommendations, haven't you?"

"Yes, miss."

"Good-by, Ellie. Good luck!"

Ellie made no movement toward the door.

With an effort she opened her mouth and said:

"There is something I ought to tell you before I go, Miss Sandra."

"Yes?" Cassandra was interrogative.

The maid began to speak in her automatic, well-placed voice.

"Ladies' maids should be born dumb, miss. But there are times when they feel their tongues. I think you should know something that Mr. Dawes' personal man told when we were staying with Mrs. Chatham. He was talking in the servants' hall, and he let out that his master had had him place Lord Hughie's trinkets in your ribbon drawer, miss."

Sandra's nostrils dilated a fraction.

Fan spoke, in a stifled voice, from the other side of the room.

"Are you telling the absolute truth, Ellie?"

"Yes, Miss Lorikeet," replied Ellie.

"Don't you think Mr. Dawes' man may have made up such a tale—his master having him put the trinkets in Miss Sandra's boudoir?"

"I don't know, miss. I'm only telling what I heard him say."

The maid, a tinge of color in her immobile face, turned again to the younger Miss Lorikeet.

"His man set the servants laughing, Miss Sandra. Your name and Mr. Dawes' were linked together, below stairs."

Cassandra put out a hand to the window sill.

"When your picture came out in the paper, miss," continued Ellie, "I asked Mr. Dawes' man if his master had managed to get hold of the photograph on your boudoir table. He denied having taken it for his master. But a chambermaid told me that she saw the photograph in Mr. Dawes' quarters not an hour after the trinkets were found in your room."

Fan said tensely:

"Are you implying, Ellie, that Mr. Dawes gave out the trinket incident to the papers?"

"I'm only telling facts, Miss Fan."

"Have you anything more to tell?"

Cassandra spoke gently.

Ellie hesitated.

"One thing more, Miss Sandra."

She shifted her satchel from her left to her right hand, eyes on her young lady.

"Risking my recommendations, miss—Mr. Dawes bribed me to give him Mr. Jerry Pollock's address in New York."

The hand lifted from the window sill rather quickly.

Fan rose.

"Bribed you, Ellie? How absurd! What possible use could Mr. Dawes have for Mr. Pollock's address?"

"I don't know, miss. I only know that Mr. Dawes gave me money for telling him." To Sandra humanely, she went on: "Oh, miss, he's a dangerous gentleman! His intentions toward you, Miss Sandra—"

"That will do, Ellie," said Fan in a shrill voice. Then sharply, "You may go now."

"Yes, miss. Good-by, Miss Sandra." The maid crossed to the door with her unobtrusive satchel. She left the rooms quietly.

Sandra leaned against the scarred window frame.

"*Il n'y a pas à dire!*" she remarked.

"So much to be said that one had better be silent!" gasped Fan, traversing the rooms with a shocked step.

Sandra turned back to the window.

Her thoughts covered each detail of their friendship with Perce Dawes. He had been instrumental in breaking up their home in New York, suggesting their sojourn in the south of France. In Nice, he had easily become their confidant, acquiring a knowledge of their restricted finances. He had secured for them the invitation that had taken them to Mrs. Chatham's—and had made

sport of them there! He had suggested these very lodgings near the fish stalls, coming to call at a time when they felt the most friendliness. He had told them of Lord Hughie's engagement. *He had mailed the newspaper clipping to Jerry Pollock!*

The house drudge knocked haphazardly at the living-room door, bawling:

"'Er sez you 'ave a call on the telyphone. 'Er sez 'urry!"

Fan stopped in her pacing.

"Shall I answer the phone, Sandra?"

Her state of shock did not prevent a readiness to save her lovelier sister a descent to the semipublic telephone.

Sandra moved to the door.

"No. You've had enough discomfort for one day."

She went out to the hall and down to the telephone. She talked there for a minute or two, voice crystallized, words punctuated by melodious laughter. Her ascent of the shabby flights was swift. She flung open the door of their rooms, entering, hot cheeked.

"Dawes!" she said graphically.

She continued at the white heat of one who is slow to anger.

"Evidently conscious of his delinquency in the Yellow Aster, for he asks us—oh! humbly—to give him to-morrow evening, to dine and dance again with him! Which shows, Fanny, where this genial acquaintance and loyal friend would place us—*déclassée*, yet not quite *outré*!" She set pointed fingers on her hips. "His 'intentions,' as Ellie calls them, are not laudable! He would make outcasts of us—our friend! He would snub us in public and dance with us in private! He would affably lead us downward. 'Shoddy places make shoddy ethics!' He sees to it that the smell of fish constantly assails our nostrils, intangibly stealing our sense of any status! Our friend! *Diable!*" In imitation of some beautiful, outraged fishgirl, Cassandra lifted

a hand to her hair and rumbled it to a riot of unruly color, in a way wholly alluring, yet not entirely modest.

"Don't!" expostulated Fan, moving away.

"We give him the evening he implores!" said adorable, quirking lips.

Fan turned, protesting.

"I'm going to pack—to 'go home.'"

"To run?" queried Sandra.

"The world is smarter than we, babe."

"We won't let the world know it!"

From the bedroom door Fan called pleadingly: "Sandra, let me take you home. You are in danger. From Dawes! From yourself!"

"In danger of self-annihilation, yes. Danger from Dawes? No! Fanny, I shall now set myself to outwit this genial *viveur* who stoops to chicanery and bribery! He has had his fun. We shall have ours. I shall lead him a dance, lead him on, even unto the divorce courts he so diligently avoids! My skill against his, in the game not worth the candle!

"Fanny, we've already lost much. Some of our pride, some of our sanity, *all* of our joy! Shall we lose everything? In the game that will lead us life knows where, we'll jig faster! In wider circles! Wilder! With joy left far behind and sanity thrown away!" Her eyes were like mica in a face whose pallor was almost phosphorescent. "*Vive la bagatelle!*" she ended with a flourish.

But Fan vanished through the bedroom door with a burst of tears.

## CHAPTER XI.

When Perce Dawes came the next evening, Fan had retired with neuralgia and a hot-water bottle. Twenty-four hours of reflection on the disloyalty of Dawes had sagged Fan's throat, made her skin porous, her hair wiry, threaded her eyes with blood skeins,

and robbed her of the nervous energy which had upheld her through former vicissitudes. She had begged Sandra to break the engagement made over the telephone. But Sandra went off to dine and dance with Dawes. She came in long after midnight.

This was the beginning of many such midnights; Sandra vivid, alarming, after some jaunt about London with Perce Dawes; Fan nerveless, ill, inclined for the first time in her life to turn her eyes away from Sandra's loveliness. Fan, not at her best, stayed out of the way when Dawes was about. He was about a good deal. What man wouldn't have been, playing the game with Cassandra Lorikeet?

Loveless, joyless, matchless, with vanity ruffled, determined to outwit any will crossing hers, Sandra rapidly tempted Dawes to open flirtation. As intrepidly, she jiggled the affair to ground less even. She had a skilled opposite in one whose tread had long been measured to the man-and-woman jig; for, no matter how intuitively dexterous she might be in enticement and escape, he exercised an equal facility in eluding and attracting.

Sandra soon broadened her prowess. Magnetizing other admirers across London, she so outshone her transient habitation that no friend cared where Sandra lived, as long as she was living! Women were included in her new category. Through feminine channels, she angled for and secured invitations enabling her to encounter her erstwhile social indorser in places at variance with his preconceived ideas of her. She began to cross wits with Dawes at cosmopolitan parties as well as gatherings where their badinage must conform to high decorum.

One of her new acquaintances, a mystic poetess, with a studio house near Hampstead, whose "undivine revelations" were widely read, persuaded Sandra Lorikeet to pose in some tableau

illustrations of her poems. Sandra's beauty, flaming forth like a challenge, made Dawes ask why she didn't go on the stage.

Her retort came gayly: why *did* he wish to annihilate her? He replied hastily that he had no intention of doing anything like that! They quarreled on the night of the tableaux in Hampstead.

But their reconciliation was a tea party which Dawes gave in Sandra's honor at the Yellow Aster, including his sister as one of the guests. Mrs. Oliver Chatham, whose composition was in the main jocular, put Sandra under the light of her eyeglass and was obviously sorry that quicksilver scratching had lost her such a witch to patronize. Mrs. Chatham even hinted at restitution, saying that lots of fun was going on now at her place in Surrey. An overture gracefully rebuffed! After which, the seasoned jigster, Perce Dawes, apparently sped off to Surrey, himself, for he disappeared summarily from Sandra's horizon. Weeks went by without him.

London was languid, with dust in the motionless air and a haze of heat quivering on the markets and streets. All day a yellow sky glared at the city and the city glared at the yellow sky, until great purple clouds heaped over the roofage, and rain came.

A note from Mrs. Chatham jovially begged Sandra's presence at a *bal travesti* in Surrey. The same mail brought a line from Dawes, asking her please to come and let him be her escort. Sandra accepted.

She bade Fan hold out a while longer in the heat which made money bothers so harassing, spent more than she should on a costume for the fancy-dress ball, and, on the night of the dance in Surrey, contrived triple mirrors by borrowing a looking-glass from the bath and another from the vicar's relict. Before this improvised triplicate mirror

she donned multicolored silk tatters with necklace and anklets of jeweled bells, which she dubbed a parody on Vanity. The garb was attuned to her mood. For her vanity hung in tatters and her heart was a jangle!

"How do I look?" she asked Dawes, as she gave him her hand in the stuffy sitting room.

"Sumptuous," he paraphrased, as if they had parted but an hour before. "What do you represent?"

"*Vaine gloire*," she laughed in his face.

In his car, Dawes said to her:

"Ask me where I've been."

She was volatile, crossing belled ankles under the light motor robe.

"Does vanity demand it?"

"Passion should," he hazarded.

"*Fi donc!*" She let fly a finger at him.

Beyond the confines of the city, before they had come in sight of the carnival lights of Chatham park, Dawes explained that he had been tied up with his solicitors. He had begun action for a divorce.

He told her, on the way to Surrey, that he wanted to wed her when he was free. For the fun of jiggling such a mate into docility and being jogged by her out of affability, he was making himself "eligible."

Sandra was silenced, listening to words that invaded her imagination with a sense of excitement almost rapacious, a steeling, corroding indifference which made marriage with Dawes seem a promise of unending change, of existence ignited by the fever of combat, of perpetual dismays and triumphs.

The eyes she turned to him were lustrous.

Sandra achieved a success that night in Surrey. Whoever she willed followed her jingling feet. She could see by the way Mrs. Chatham treated her that Perce had confided in his sister. The news had been carried on. Dawes,



the indolent, had instituted divorce proceedings. The tall girl in rags and bells, who had figured in the Rowson trinket scandal and afterward been seen about town with Dawes, was the *raison d'être*.

The stars had gone and daylight was coming when Dawes and Sandra motored back to London. The air was still and sultry even at dawn. There was a spiritless hood of mustard-colored clouds where the sun would struggle up through the mists.

Dawes evinced a proprietary disposition to laugh at the adulation she had roused as Vanity.

"When you're mine," he said, "I'll put you in a pumpkin shell and keep you there."

She watched the conflict between fog and sun, saying in a drawling contralto:

"Peter, Peter, pumpkin eater,  
Had a wife and couldn't keep her."

He flushed.

"I'll keep this one—Sandie."

She frowned.

"I don't like nicknames."

"I do, Cass." He laughed, and jingled one of the tiny bells on her wrist.

She averted her face, freeing her hand with a metallic tinkle.

"What a profile you have!" he exclaimed with relish. "You're a beauty, from top to toe!" He went on making talk, while his eyes lingered over the line of her cheek and throat, the gold lashes, the nearly flamboyant hair. "I think I'll dress you mostly in amber—that's close to pumpkin-colored. Topaz in your ears and on those long, perfect fingers of yours, your feet shod pointedly with topaz buckles, your hair just as it is now, blown about and jewelless! You *must* wear amber, San." He watched the color rise and fade in her cheek. "A tuppence for your thoughts," he said easily.

She spoke with a slur that made her words seem inconsequential.

"I was thinking irrelevantly—what torrents of brass it must take to perpetrate trinkety slanders."

He gave her an involuntary stare.

"Brass? Isn't that some sort of Americanism? Just what does it mean?"

She answered, watching a cloud take on saffron tints:

"Effrontery."

He was silent.

"I have another random thought," she vouchsafed. "Why does the pursuing male always take it for granted that the fleeing damsel is a naiad out of water?"

"Some of them so resemble pond lilies," was his guarded explanation.

"And, reaching for blooms afloat, no man could be expected to remember how deep some still ponds are!" she retorted.

He laughed.

"I owe you a tuppence!" he said.

They entered her street, where the market wagons were rumbling.

"May I go up and tell that sister of yours our news?" he asked, as he stopped the car before her lodgings. "She is generally astir when I take you anywhere."

"As you please," said Sandra, stepping from the machine, her cloak gathered about her bare ankles.

Climbing the hall stairs, she said to him:

"But I haven't said yet I'll marry you, my dear Dawes."

He halted on a landing under the round window.

"Then say it, for I don't want to be chagrined before Fanny."

"I might save Fan chagrin by not saying it," she answered, going on.

He followed, catching two of her flying tatters to rein her.

"Giddap! I'll 'ave you in 'arness yet," he jested, parodying some cockney blusterer.

"Had a wife, and couldn't keep her!" she taunted, leaving the ribbons in his hands as she opened her door and



preceded him into the murky sitting room.

He shut the door, pulled her to him by the ragged reins, and kissed her.

"Will you be so sassy, gal?" His lips were on her eyes, hair, and throat.

The endearment he had some right to expect found Sandra thrusting the length of the sofa between them.

Dawes hung his top hat on a knob of the sofa, leaned over the back, well-shaped hands propped on it. She threw off her cloak and laid it over the dingy upholstery. The room was hot with the mists of the morning. Their regard of one another, the length of the battered antique seat, was prolonged, analytical, watchful.

"A trinket for your thoughts," he said sociably.

She strummed a strain of dance music on the high back of the sofa.

"A topaz?" she bartered.

"Any number of them, wife that I'll keep!"

"They'll cost you dearly—my thoughts," she warned, eyes beginning to sparkle, almost yellow.

He was unperturbed, though interested.

"Out with them. Do they concern me?"

"They concern"—her voice took on the intonation of having a choice anecdote to relate—"a pair of parrots who, not so long ago, came out into the world of men and play passions, and women and claws. One of the polls thought the other had plumage extraordinary enough to attract the attention of kingly fools. They met a knave who found them so diverting, in their vanity, that he couldn't keep from teasing them and trying to ruffle their feathers. So—he lost them a sugared cracker. It was accomplished by having his body servant do the dastardly deed of slipping a masculine trinket case among her ribbons, finding the case when every one who counted was present, and even

filching her picture and feeding it to the press. There are villains bold enough to do these things!

"Having thus thrown vitriol into the face of the parrot plans, he proceeded to eject them into an isolation to which he alone had ingress. He clipped off their friends; treachery was not below him! He maneuvered for nothing more heinous, perhaps, than to pluck a feather from the vainest poll. As parrots do sometimes, she turned the trick by— Any one knows how parrots turn tricks! He soon saw that to wring her pretty neck, he'd have to ring her pretty claw. You owe me a topaz, Perce." She ended abruptly.

He tried to laugh.

"I do!"

She watched the light gloss his hat.

"Were you actually guilty of such a malfeasance? Putting Lord Hughie's trinket case in my room and starting the search which led to my mock dishonor?"

He held up his hands, refuting any responsibility. But his face was a bit too highly colored for comfort, and a gleam of acrimony shone in his eyes.

Her eyes came to him. She folded her arms, silken tatters over tatters, fingers quiescent. Her fleet scrutiny of him was curious.

"You are malevolent!"

"I have a streak of malice in me," he admitted, smiling.

She did not smile.

"To assure yourself the lifelong pleasure of playing such tricks on me, of subduing and isolating me, you wish to make me your wife?"

With unwonted frankness, he laughed.

"I'm mean enough to look forward to ruffling you sometimes. I love you for your *vaine gloire*, Sandie!"

"You love me?" she echoed contemptuously.

He went around the old sofa to her.

"Yes," he said, suddenly magnetic.

She drew back from him.

"You don't know what love is!"

"I'll love to teach you all I know!"

Her hand touched the sofa.

"I don't want to learn—of you."

"Why don't you want to learn of me? Afraid?"

"No!" She shook her head, hair loosening about her flawless, repelling face.

"Another man has played with you in love's kindergarten? Is that it? I don't want any childish memories on our slate, so I'll wipe them off, my darling." He took her in his arms and kissed her again.

And, by the sheer force of the diverse currents between them, he made her kiss him! This was his easy triumph—her lips on his.

Sandra's victories, all of them, fell away to reveal the fragile fact of her womanhood. Her mind, at its acutest, visualized marriage with this man, Dawes. Marriage! Marriage! The gift of herself, to Dawes? The topmost passion, with Dawes? She saw another face, unmanned by love, dreamy, chivalrous, pleading for marriage. Marriage, with Dawes?

Her hand flew out to the sofa.

"Oh, God, no!" she said, involuntarily wrenching herself from his arms and putting her forehead on crossed hands. Instantly, she managed a shaken laugh, dropping her arms and looking at him with quirking mouth and fagged eyes. "I'm tired, Perce," she said more collectedly. "Say good-by now."

Having won the last point, he obligingly took his hat from the sofa knob.

"Love's tiring," he conceded. "Hardly worth its trinkets!" He went, with his zesty, mature tread, to the door, saying, on the threshold:

"Good-by, my Cass. Until our next tilt—and love lesson." The door closed behind his attractive, possessive figure.

She listened to his footsteps going down the stairs. The blue-bordered curtains hung motionless at the windows of the sitting room, neatly stitched

hems limned by the daylight and limp from the fog. Beyond the windows were high, sharp roofs, a slim spire, and two towers, against an ochre sky. Sandra stretched her arms and let them fall at her sides.

She crossed to the partially open bedroom door. The door failed to swing to her touch because of some weight against the other side. Stepping through such space as she could, she found Fan lying in a faint at the entrance to the bedroom.

In concern, Sandra knelt in the hot room to apply a dilution of aromatic ammonia. She managed to carry her sister to the bed and pull the bed to the window, where there was more air. With her finger on Fan's wrist, she waited for the pulse to steady. She realized, for the first time, the change that had come upon Fan of late; hollows in the fleshy cheeks, eyelids puckered, nostrils pinched, mouth drawn, hair deadened, hands nerveless and dry. Sandra stroked the pulse back to its normal beat.

Fan opened her eyes.

For a moment, she looked at Sandra without any animate expression. Then she looked at the door to the sitting room. She shuddered. Sandra saw that the heat hadn't been entirely responsible for Fan's collapse; she had evidently overheard the "love scene" with Dawes.

"Why weren't you asleep, Fan?" she asked, putting back the unwaved hair with a touch of demonstration. "Was it too warm in here?"

Fan sat up.

"You mustn't marry that man, Sandra!"

"Never mind about men," soothed Sandra, rising. "Shall I mix you some lemonade?"

"I've been your ruination!" declared Fan.

"No, you haven't." Sandra went to an ice box fastened at the window

ledge. She mixed a tall glass of cooling drink. "This will make you feel better."

"You drink it," said Fan. Then in an agonized tone, "I never should have let you know that man!"

Sandra put the glass of lemonade to the dry lips.

Fan pushed it away, and the iced stuff spilled on her gown. She stood up, shivering.

"See," she said, "I spoil everything." She sat down in terror. "I brought you over here, babe—wouldn't let you marry at home!" She began to shake, caught the sheets in her hands, and put them to her breast.

Sandra was alarmed.

"You're ill, Fanny. I'll call a physician."

"No, we can't afford medical service!" cried Fan. "You don't realize. You're a child about money." She was panicky. "I'm ill—it's true! Sandra, send for some trustworthy man—for Jerry Pollock."

Sandra was cooling the sheets with a cologne atomizer.

"Jerry?" she asked slowly. "I doubt if he'd come."

"Have you lost every lover but Dawes?"

Sandra turned the pillows.

"Never mind. Lie down and try to sleep."

"I shall never sleep again," said Fan with conviction.

"Yes, you will. Each degradation passes."

"Sandra, Dawes wants to teach you all he knows about love and life!"

"He'll not teach me, Fanny. I'm through."

"What's left?" Then, after a pause, "Sandra, let's go home."

"We will. Lie down, Fanny."

"Promise that we'll go home."

"I promise."

Fan lay down in the hot room, faint again.

## CHAPTER XII.

Sandra went back to the sitting room and stood at a window there.

The towers, the spire, and the roof-age were bathed in vaporous sunlight which shone densely humid and at the same time had quivers of motion in it which gave the housetops the appearance of being played on by uneasy fingers of interminable length. Down in the street, the business of life was beginning again. Produce trucks and fish carts; women bargaining for food; men hurrying somewhere to make money enough for the women to haggle in the market place. From other streets, sounds of the city's living, softened by the haze and the heat to the murmur that one might hear in a gigantic sea shell. The beginning of another day, and humanity staggering up to meet it.

Sandra's mind went back many days, as she looked at the slim spire like a needle in the mists, fragile, blurred. She thought of herself as a child, as a girl, as a woman—and wondered just why she had ever been born in the misty world. Perhaps, for nothing more than to give a few men the mingled pleasure and pain of beholding her, and a few women the chance to scratch or turn faint on her account. For herself, for that inward satisfaction which arises from being clear cut in the sight of God, she could find no justification in the accidental happening which had brought her to life. Yet, as she was a living, breathing thing, who must go on living until eternity claimed her, she must take count of herself—and decide what to do with herself.

She thought of Perce Dawes.

In the swift circles wherein her isolation with the malignant jokester would be enacted, if she wed him when he was free, she would be sucked into a vortex from which she might not emerge herself. Afterward, there might be other

matings, other men—sulphurous, waxy. If she married Dawes, she would jig as long as her beauty lasted. Some day she would wake up as if from a sullen drug. She would close her triple mirrors. Men would pass before her like so many malignant shades. She would twirl out some night, and lie seared and yellowed before her God.

She looked above the spire at the changing sky. She would not marry Dawes.

There was Jerry Pollock.

Jerry stood for the joy she had lost in her far reach for revelry. Her thoughts could not dwell on Jerry, for somehow she heard again his outcry: "What do you want me to do? Believe? In my house where children should be playing—" She remembered Jerry as one recalls a face one may not dare to look upon, for fear of seeing too much reflected there. No! Jerry was gone. Like joy.

And her future?

The stage had been suggested to her as a medium for annihilation. Why not use it as a medium for a livelihood? In the playhouses, beauty counted; joylessness, too. She resolved to return to New York and possibly interview producers there. Not that the men of one metropolis were less tricky than the men of another.

She stared at the slender spire in the mists.

That day, Sandra wrote Perce Dawes a letter. An epistle which, couching the word "trinkets" in its graceful lines, terminated any impending intimacy between them.

Before he had time to reply, Cassandra, with Fan, sailed from Liverpool.

### CHAPTER XIII.

The Lorikeet girls were back in New York after their sojourn abroad.

An obscure hotel on Gramercy Park was their refuge in the great town of

which they had once been residents, but were now mere atoms in its transient flow. The hostelry was no place for Fan's nerves. So, on the advice of a neurologist who prescribed "homy faces," they went to stay with their cousin, Lilly Polk, in Staten Island.

Neither the voyage nor the skyline of Manhattan nor the daily walks beside the Narrows where the harbor boats were coming and going, had lessened a tension which would not let Fan Lorikeet lie down in peace at night. She had said in London that she could never sleep again, and it seemed as if this might come true, for almost every night she lay awake, mind wandering through the labyrinth she and Sandra had traversed in the chase for a great *parti*; encountering in the network of paths Sandra's lovers—Jerry Pollock, Lord Hughie, young Tomlinson, Perce Dawes—following all the winding ways of the Lorikeets' mistakes; going through the no less tortuous intricacies of the present; taking stock of their finances and of the stage future which Sandra was planning in their daytime walks by the Narrows. Cassandra an atom in the ebb and flow of the theaters? Labyrinthian, indeed!

Fan would wake her younger sister, in terror, crying:

"You are lost, babe!"

Sandra would be drowsy.

"Lost?"

"You haven't a suitor left! I've ruined your life!"

Waking, Sandra would quiet Fan, sometimes using a familiar name as a narcotic, saying she might take up again with Jerry Pollock, talking in the night of love, as if it were still for her, as if she might go back the way she had come, and find clarity.

"If only you would!" cried Fan one night.

"If I would?" mocked Sandra.

"I could sleep."

"Could you, Fanny?"

"All the way, you'll be adrift unless you——"

"And a woman *à flot* rouses malice in men?"

"Yes. Malice! Passion! Oh, babe, bring Jerome here and let me give you to him! Unless I rest soon," she continued more wakefully, "I may die!"

"Don't say that, my dear."

"It's the labyrinth, Sandra!"

"I'll find a way out."

"One of the ways—not the *one* way! Not the natural way you would have taken if I had not made you vain. Tomorrow, go get Jerry Pollock and bring him to me. If you make a promise, you won't break it. Promise!"

"I can't promise this, Fanny!" In the dark, Sandra threw an arm over wet eyes.

Fan was awake all night. In the morning light from the Narrows, her face was gray and sunken.

"If you loved me," she said queerly, "you'd go."

Sandra replied with as queer a look. Barefooted, she went to her mirror—the triple glass she had looked into the day their furniture was stored. Lilly Polk had fitted up her guest room with the gray-and-poppy suite. Opening the mirrors wide, she scanned her face from three angles: chiseled profile, sharply cut cheek line, full reflection of hair burning from molten to auburn, mouth blurred by a hint of sophistry, shadows in the eyes for any man to see. With scant vanity, she twisted up her hair.

"You must not lose any more sleep over me, Fanny," she said, turning from the mirrors and beginning to dress, with a glance cognizant of Fan's exhaustion. She drew on shoes of London make, selected a dark suit wristed with angora, a hat of batavia, embroidered with black worsted leaves.

She caught up gloves and bag with odd haste.

## CHAPTER XIV.

The Pollock bookshop browsed on Fifth Avenue like an unobtrusive don. Even the window script, "Jerome Pollock, First Editions and Rare Prints," and the window display of scrolls and etchings, veritable feasts for the bibliophile, had the look of being fixed for all time.

Sandra Lorikeet, entering the rare bookshop, glanced up at the balconies where she had read her first fairy tales, at the slow-ticking clocks and the swinging seat with the reading rest, and at doors below, leading to catacombs of treasured volumes and tiers of dusty pamphlets. Her step slowed and her breath lengthened. She stood for a moment near one of the bookstalls, putting out a hand to touch some of the volumes tarnished by handling and age.

She asked a spectacled clerk for Jerome, and was told that the owner of the place was at present locating a fifteenth-century volume below stairs.

Sandra said she knew the way.

Her progress across the shop was not unlike that of the blind going by familiar ways. She paused, again, before opening a door that led down a half flight of solid steps to the quiet book catacombs. Here, she came to a definite halt. She lifted locked hands to her lips.

At the far end of a dim aisle, a single electric bulb disclosed a masculine figure whose brown head and slightly stooping shoulders seemed part of the seclusion and twilight of lore.

Looking at him, the length of the aisle, her heart seemed to stop and begin again audibly. She felt poised halfway between flight and advance. All her vanities and evasions swept before her mind, making, it seemed, a blur between herself and the man at the other end of the underground galleries, where many buried books exhaled the intangible scent of much knowledge, gathered be-

tween covers at much cost. Either to retreat or go forward seemed hard. Yet she must do one or the other, now she had come.

She moved forward, touching the ancient pamphlets on each side of the obscure aisle, treading soundlessly.

Jerry had found his fifteenth-century volume and was poring over it.

By the light of the single electric ray, which outlined his classical profile against dark files of almost priceless reading matter, Sandra noticed that the muscles about his mouth and eyes had tightened, his skin was browner, his brows heavier, his lips more ascetic. A feeling of guilt ran through her. She wanted to put her forehead on a dusty shelf and weep—for him—for herself.

Instead, hardly of her own volition, she stretched out her fingers and put them on the yellowed pages in his hands. Her words were low, involuntarily tender.

"What a bookworm you are!"

Jerry turned.

He neither colored nor paled, but the pupils of his fine eyes dilated and he backed against his shelves of learning. He spoke as if he were dreaming.

"I did not hear you coming."

Her cadence had the same dream quality.

"I came so quickly."

"Few people know the steps to my catacombs," he said without breath, as if addressing a recurrent vision.

"I remembered them," she said, visionary, too.

They were silent—one of those rare, unreal moments which sometimes spring out of the confusion of life, holding them enthralled.

The passing of the moment found him balancing the volume in his hand, looking at her, and saying nothing. Then finally, he asked:

"Where did you come from, Sandra?"

"Why, down the steps from the

store." She looked back along the aisle.

"How long have you been home—in America?"

"I hardly know."

"Is Fan with you?"

"Yes."

"Are you——"

"No, I'm not married."

The blood leaped to his face, his hands tightened on the old volume, his eyes turned from her.

She felt a vagrant quiver of dismay, and said hastily:

"We're stopping with our cousins, the Polks, in Tompkinsville, on Staten Island."

He made no comment on this.

Had she yielded to her emotions, she would have put out her hands and touched the thick-growing hair which the electric light dappled to chestnut, encircled his head with her fingers, and begged him to look at her in the old way—the swift, strong look of passion which he could not help! Assailed by such temptation, she took refuge in the mission which had brought her, speaking half mechanically.

"Fan's ill—did you know it?"

He shelved the volume.

"No. What's the trouble?"

"Nerves. She's full of sad fancies. The neurologist thought familiar faces might help, so we came to the Polks. They haven't helped." She continued, talking down an impulse to fling herself in his arms and close her eyes against his breast, "Fanny doesn't sleep. Her fancy is to blame herself continually for"—a note of derision was in the silvery voice—"my failure to ensnare any of England's matrimonial catches. She isn't to be blamed for that—is she?"

Still he was not looking at her.

"Hardly."

"She takes the blame sleeplessly. Unless rest comes to her, she may die."

"Is it as bad as that?"



Sandra's oblong eyes darkened.

"She seems to feel that fate has a closed fist over my head which at any minute might crash."

"Over your head?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"We've spent a good deal of money—and I plan to earn my living on the stage."

"Oh!" His monosyllable was a terse outcry.

She continued hurriedly.

"But I can't reshape the future with Fanny melancholic."

"True." He had curbed his voice.

"This must be hard for you."

"Harder for Fanny."

After a minute, she said unsteadily:

"Jerry, will you help me help Fan?"

"In what way?" He was looking at her now.

To steady her pulses, she rested her furred wrist against the bookshelves.

She diagnosed Fan's case.

"If she could believe me saved out of all this seeming ruin, I think her nerves would quiet and gradually regain their balance. Once herself, she could reason without so much woe. Last night, she talked of my being adrift. This morning her face was deathly. I'm fond of Fanny, if I'm fond of any one!"

She traced nothings with her gloved finger tip in the dust of the bookshelves, eyes down, voice barely audible.

"Jerry, I came over to town to ask you a favor. We were friends once. Neighbors. I want you to come back to Staten Island with me. Fan's unhappy because I am roofless—suitorless. I want you to help me fool Fanny into believing that you are going to roof me, that you love me as you thought you loved me when we were younger. I want you to play the old love game with me for a little while, before Fan. It will help her regain her sense of normality. Once she is well again, we

will part amicably. Will you do this foolish thing for me, Jerry?" She took her wrist from the ledge, looking at him in self-mockery which made her face intensely beautiful.

A shade of the mockery was reflected on his face, elevating his brows, narrowing his eyes, giving a tragic twist to his mouth.

"You don't mind asking a hard thing of me, Sandra."

"No. Because Fan is really ill."

"Fan's health is necessarily a vital matter, but do you think I'm big enough game to afford her any sort of satisfaction."

She winced.

"Don't be ungenerous, Jerry."

His hand swung toward her and jerked back. His concession to her request that he make love to her again, for Fan's sake, came grimly.

"You wish me to go back with you at once?"

She nodded, and said:

"If you will."

He stood aside, waiting for her to precede him down the aisle. As he came behind her in the dusk of the place, he lighted the way by clicking on electric bulbs. At the steps, she might have turned and faced him in the old provocative way, eyes slits of laughter, mouth alluring. Or she might have turned in a new way, eyes shadowed, mouth prayerful. She mounted the steps with her hand on the wall as she went. Once, not so very long ago, he had not been able to be near her without some demonstration of love! She had kissed him and controlled him. Now— What did this control of his portend? She experienced a sense of blankness in asking herself the question.

They emerged into the bookshop and went through it, in silence.

"I'll get my car from the garage," Jerry told her. "Do you mind walking a few blocks?"

"Not at all." Her civility matched his.

They went to a garage near by, and were soon seated in his roadster. In the trip over to Staten Island and on the run along a turnpike to the Polk home in Tompkinsville, their conversation would not have covered half a page in a book. It was stereotyped. Yet they were seated close together, shoulders all but touching!

As they ascended the Polk staircase, Jerry said semiseriously:

"Give me your hand. If we are to fool Fan, we must play the game."

She obeyed. She might have tarried on the stairs, leaned against him as his hand engulfed hers, making the ascent an excuse for spent breath. But she went on, hand inanimate in his. At the threshold of the gray-and-poppy room, she said with a semblance of joy:

"Fanny, here's some one to see you."

They enacted the love game for Fan's benefit.

Jerry asked Fan if he might roof Cassandra, make her his, care for her, rule her, all with a lover's prescribed gravity. Sandra assumed gayety, while shame colored her to the requisite rapture, and a sweeping sense of ignominy made her eyes brilliant with unshed tears.

Fan said of the foolery concocted for her peace of mind:

*"L'homme propose, et Dieu dispose."* She spoke with the slight awkwardness of one who mentions God infrequently.

Jerry carried on the game by asking how soon he might have Cassandra.

"I'll sleep the night she's your bride, Jerome," said Fan, looking up at him with eyes which had lost a part of their triviality and most of their arrogance.

"You shall sleep to-night, Fan," was his disconcerting assertion.

He turned to Sandra, holding out his hands to her, a sudden flare of color in his lean, attractive face.

"We have Fan's blessing," he said. "Shall we now assure her a night's rest?" He was playing his part in the love game extraordinarily well.

Sandra matched his precipitancy with evasion.

"Need we be hasty in helping on her slumber?"

"But if we can give her immediate tranquillity, is there any reason for not doing so?"

"Every reason," she answered in sham badinage.

He turned back to the insomniac, scant humor on his chivalrous face.

"I've waited long enough for her. I shall marry her to-day." Then, briefly, "We don't want her on the stage, Fan."

"No," Fan answered hurriedly. And, for his first words, "You deserve to have your way. You should have had her long ago, Jerome." A tremor shook the superficial voice. Fan looked at Sandra, whose eyes were down and whose flawless modeling had never been more apparent. "Is it any wonder, my dear boy, that her sex slandered her and your sex persecuted her—tried to joke with her?"

Sandra intercepted any confidences which the occasion seemed to warrant.

"Never mind, Fanny."

Jerry spoke to Fan.

"It was unsafe to let her roam so far. But you brought her back safely. That's to your credit, neighbor."

Fan's trivial laugh was uncertain from disuse.

"And you remained single for her. That's to your credit, young neighbor." She continued with a spurt of her former energy, "An elopement might be expedient, children. I'm hardly strong enough to carry through the fuss of a wedding. Yes, Jerome, I'd rush her through a ceremony. Take her off. Cherish her. She has always loved you." Fan put her head against her chair rest, looking at the lovers with an expression faintly spiritual.

Jerry, in admirable triumph, took Sandra from the room, closing the door behind them.

In the hall, Sandra put her hand on the balustrade.

"Thank you," she said, face burning. "The playhouses have lost an actor in you!"

His face held the same fire.

"Have we finished the comedy?"

"Yes." She held out a hand, dismissing him with the action.

Jerry caught up her hand in his arm so violently that she felt the play of his muscles.

"If we don't complete the job, how can we carry on Fan's healing?" he demanded ironically. "We may have helped her to-day. But to-morrow? There's but one way to ease Fan permanently." His words were merely incidental, with his eyes suddenly impelling and his arm bruising her hand.

A queer flicker, allied to laughter and sobbing, made her reply in the same vein.

"Fan's welfare is all vital. But it can be sustained by foolery."

"Then leave Fan out of it. How about *our* welfare?"

"Ours?" The flicker rose in her.

"Yours. Mine." His voice roughened. "Mine!"

She laid a finger on his lips.

"Come downstairs with me. It can't help Fanny to hear us fight."

He remained where he was.

"It can't help us to budge, until we've come to a final understanding."

Her finger did not drop, touching his mouth as he spoke.

"Don't we finally understand?"

"Understand what?" His eyes were haggard above her finger.

"That we said a final good-by in London, and that——"

"Our good-by can never be final," he interrupted quickly.

"And that I am all you called me, a cheat, a liar."

"All of us cheat and lie, at some time or other."

"Then let your tolerance be my last thought of you. Good-by."

"Say au revoir, but not good-by!"

"The past is dead!"

"Love cannot die!"

They were speaking in unconscious rhythm.

"Come downstairs with me, Sandra."

"To say good-by at the foot, Jerry?"

"No!"

"To——"

"Yes!"

She was trembling.

"To-day?"

"Shall we wait to be married?"

"But—so soon!"

"So soon? How many years has it been?"

"Love knows!" She answered desolately.

"Too many years, Cassandra!" He released her hand to bend back the fingers and study her palm, as if to read in its delicately intricate lines the number of the arid years. "Sandra! Sandra! I love you!" broke from him in the old way. "To-day, I looked up from a musty volume and found your hand across the page! You had come back, across the ocean, to me! To belong to me! To be *mine*!" He kissed each line of her palm deliberately.

It seemed as if every blue vein of her felt the impress of his lips and quickened madly. Where once she had not been afraid to invite his caresses, and, once, she had let him go, now her mounting passion for him—a new thing, yet an old thing—made her tremble from the caresses she might shower on him, the kisses she might render, the confessions that might leave him confounded by their very prodigality.

She followed the line of his kisses until they reached her lips, and she lost track of anything save the way he sealed her mouth with all the silences and stress between them. She would

have cried out against such mastery, had she not felt irrevocably on the eve of complete surrender, of a subjugation always meant to be.

"Come," he said.

Sandra followed him down the stairs.

## CHAPTER XV.

They were married in a Tompkinsville parsonage. They went back to Fan, who had got together the traveling requisites of an elopement. They kissed Fan and bade her sleep. In his car they drove away.

"Where?" asked Sandra.

"Home, for my bags," replied Jerry.

In crossing the ferry and in the ride uptown, neither of them spoke often.

They were soon in the block of Manhattan where they had lived in adjacent houses. The two residences she remembered best were the same—even a party awning at the house with the burnished brasses—and there was no change at all in the solid doors, window hangings, and handsome hulk of the house whose steps she ascended with Jerry.

In the Pollock drawing-room, Sandra sank into a chair of brown leather with wide arms and a tall back. A fire burned on the hearth. It might have been last night when she sang "*Un-Peu*

*d'Amour*" at the Pollock piano. The Riviera, London, seemed long ago.

She watched Jerry add a fresh log to the fire, throw another log in, and another, until the conflagration was reflected the breadth of the room lined with mellow etchings, furnished comfortably, ceiled spaciously.

She rose, to stay his hand.

"You'll set your house afire," she protested, the first to speak.

He laughed, watching the firelight fall aslant her hair and lashes, her eyes.

Retaining his hand, she fitted it, palm to palm, with her own.

"Once, I tried to hold to this hand for safety," she mused, penitent. "Yet —isn't the definition of safety *love*? Isn't love the one safe thing in the universe? But if it were the most *unsafe* thing—"

He had kissed her wrist. She stooped to kiss his, with a single word.

"Beloved!"

Jerry fell to his knees so that their eyes might be level, and lost her eyes as she straightened. He rose. In her face shadows of folly were submerged in sweetness and pallor and an allurements which had its touch of glory. His features held no trace of asceticism before a tide of exultation.

She yielded to his arms swiftly.



## THE MOMENT

I LOOKED into your eyes when I was young,

A moment since, they say,  
And in the centuries that hurried by  
I have not looked away.

Was it a decade, think you, since we met  
A quick-drawn breath ago,  
When you were merely you, nor any eyes  
Had power to hold me so?

DOROTHY STOCKBRIDGE.



# The Camel's Back

By Olga Petrova

Author of "The Ghoul,"  
"Tuberoses," etc.

**H**E whistled jauntily as he turned from a survey of the river craft which plied their way up and down and past his office windows, and with a scarcely perceptible shrug he seated himself at his desk.

From a drawer on the right he drew a box of Corona Coronas. With many pinchings and caressings and inhalings, he selected one, snipped its tip with a small gold cigar cutter suspended from his watch chain, and proceeded with the ceremony of lighting and enjoying it.

The sunlight that fell sideways from the windows picked out with unerring fingers the several silver hairs glistening brightly among thousands of their sable brethren and made wider the already wide furrow that ran from temple to jaw bone.

It cast a high light upon the leonine brow and threw around the deep-set eyes exaggerated shadows.

It silhouetted the outline of the massive shoulders and played hide-and-seek among the facets of the diamond that gleamed incongruously from the little finger of his left hand. The hand, wide and hairy, terminated in long, powerful fingers which seemed to menace the peace and safety of anything so fragile as a Corona Corona cigar.

Those who are inclined to form impressions of character from such unconscious things as hands would point

triumphantly to the fact that, in this particular case, the man's whole method of life, his peculiarities and successes, were characterized mutely, but unmistakably, by his hands and his fingers.

They had wrested prizes from life for him, in spite of almost overwhelming handicaps. They had caressed or strangled, patted or pounded, such obstacles out of his path as had stood between him and the thing desired, from the days when, as a boy, he had stood friendless and alone at the pit's mouth until, all rivals vanquished, he subscribed his signature as president of one of the largest steel corporations of the world.

Some friends he had made along the way and legion enemies; the latter not because of any particular injustices wrought against them on his part; quite the contrary; but, because success always makes for itself enemies among those who are either too spineless, too lazy, or too utterly lacking in the most ordinary equipment to enter the fight for that success themselves.

There were many who would have been willing to fawn and flatter, to suck, leechlike, at the fountain of his very blood, as long as no actual labor was entailed; but, receiving no encouragement other than a terse refusal of their friendship, they ranged themselves bitterly against him.

From his employees, all envious of the fact that he, through his own bit-

ter labors—such labors as they with their union hours would never suffer—had achieved the position of a “boss,” to the mothers of marriageable daughters who looked discreetly the other way as he balanced his peas on his knife, he was either hated, envied, or despised. As for his contemporary rivals, many were the plots and ramifications of plots hatched to send him toppling down from his high estate, in order to leave his room for more worthy than he to occupy. One metropolitan journal was richer by some hundreds of thousands for printing “little intimate facts” concerning him which had had their birth in the fertile imaginations of a certain group of his persecutors.

At thirty-six, he had bought for himself, straight from the Newport market, a sweet, simpering miss of some seventeen summers.

She was of the very inner four hundred, and, with an utter veneration of caste, he had worshiped her as the mother of future generations of the dynasty he intended to found, hallowed by her blood.

Later, after making several trips to Europe, he had experienced an uncomfortable sensation that he should have turned to an older hierarchy if he wanted to be absolutely positive that no shadows of mousetraps or packing tins or what not, should ever flourish a bar sinister upon his mental coat of arms.

But he was still more or less in love with his bride, and at times the mousetrap became nebulous and far from his consciousness.

At fifty-eight, with two sons at Oxford and a couple of daughters fresh from Paris and Bryn Mawr, he sometimes wished he had found Dora's eyes less bright erstwhile and not so palely blue now. She had fulfilled her destiny, nevertheless, for she had unlocked for him that outer gate which stands

between some of the more exclusive of the elect and ex-pit boys. His millions accomplished the rest.

In spite of the fact that at first his manners were of the pit pitty, he was anxious to learn, and proved to be an apt and quick student.

Having been a pit boy, he was “against” democracy. He would willingly have given half his millions for an authentic, even if small, portrait gallery. He was one of the examples of the greatest fallacy of all times, the fallacy that any one but the underest of under dogs wants or believes in the piffle of equality, fraternity—call it what you will. And with under dogs, as with fleas, there are many nether degrees, each one comparatively aristocratic or plutocratic, in contradistinction to the degree of the more miserable, therefore more democratic, kennel inhabitant.

He was turning such thoughts over in his mind; reliving the years which stretched from his pit-boy days to now, and meanwhile all appearance of animation seemed suspended.

His enormous shoulders scarcely rose or fell with the action of his lungs. His cigar had burned, long ago, to a white ash. He had not noticed it. The sun had moved several feet to the left, casting the mellow softness of the dying day into the far corner of the room.

For two hours he had sat, and not a sound had broken the stillness. In the very heart of New York he was as aloof and as alone as on some vast mountaintop.

With a slight start he came back from the land of thought to more mundane things. He pulled a sheet of paper toward him and wrote rapidly for a second or two. Then carefully he read his scree and affixed his signature.

Taking up the receiver of his private telephone, he summoned his private secretary. Subconsciously he picked up



the melody at the point where he had left it two hours ago and whistled it again.

Nothing in his appearance nor in his manner suggested that he had just written and signed his more or less enforced resignation from the presidency of his corporation. Nothing suggested that of all his millions he had actually as little to-day as he had had forty-six years ago. In fact, he had been richer then, for then his life, with all its promise, lay before him; now it lay behind, hazy and nebulous as a mirage.

He lifted the telephone receiver a second time.

Already his hitherto obsequious servitor was taking advantage of his employer's downfall to finish his cigarette before replying to the summons. As the message passed across the wire for the third time, the door opened.

"See that this is delivered immediately," he said quietly.

The secretary took the letter. He regarded his employer with a half smile, with the expression of the lower dog who glories in the chastisement and unmerited shame of the hitherto upper dog.

"Miss Maynard has just arrived," he said nonchalantly. "Do you want to see her, or shall I tell her you're not seeing any one to-day?"

"I'll see her," replied his employer, after a moment's thought.

The secretary withdrew, to return a few seconds later with a fashionably dressed woman, exquisite of figure and of carriage.

She waited until they were alone before she held out her hands.

"It isn't true! I can't believe it's true! Is it? Is it?"

"Quite true," he answered slowly.

"But not everything? You don't mean literally that everything has gone. Not—not—the house at Port Washington!"

"No. That's in your name, you know."

She sighed with relief.

"Yes, of course. How stupid of me!"

"And there will always be the income from what I made over to you five years ago, to keep it up," he went on quietly.

Her face brightened.

"You were always so thoughtful!" she cooed. Things were not going to be so bad, after all.

"The yacht will have to go, though, I'm afraid," he went on. "I'm dreadfully sorry, because I know you'll miss her."

A thought occurred to her.

"Why couldn't we rent her for the season?" she suggested. "In a few months at the most you will be back where you were before, and then we'll take a trip around the world. We could never get anything so beautiful as the *Albatross* again. Oh, don't let's part with her!" she insisted.

She rose from her chair at the opposite side of the desk and came toward him.

A fragrance of cedar and of sandalwood filled the air as she moved. In the amber light from the dying sun her arms gleamed softly as she raised them for that caress so old that it is forever new and though new is yet so old. The silky softness of her hair touched his cheek.

"Don't sell the *Albatross*," she whimpered, and laid her lips against his ear. The soft breath lulled him into a moment's inertia. The crooning voice went on. "I couldn't bear to part with her! Do you remember that night at Algiers, just after we had come back to the ship and stood watching the lights fade out, one by one, from the shore, and you promised that whatever happened we should always keep the *Albatross* and make a honeymoon in her every year; that we shouldn't ex-

change her for a new boat no matter how old or how out of date she became? Do you remember?" she repeated.

The veins showed blue in the whiteness of his forehead. Gently, but firmly, he released his neck from her encircling arms.

"I'm sorry," he said. "It is not in my power to keep that promise now."

The finality of his tone chilled her. She made one more attempt.

"Is your wife going to keep the *Wodin*?" she asked.

He gave a short laugh.

"I thought you understood that everything's gone. Everything! I was thinking seriously of asking you for a job as head gardener or even under gardener at Port Washington. I'm very good at flowers, you know." He regarded her intently.

"Don't be so absolutely absurd!" she said sharply.

"I was never more serious in my life," he returned. "I don't see how I am to visit you in the future unless I can be of some use, some service."

"You haven't any feelings at all!" she wept. "You can see me lose the thing I love best in the world and make ridiculous jokes about it."

"That isn't so, Minna," he put in. "You must know that on your account I am sorrier for this catastrophe than I can say, and, for myself, what is there to say? I didn't mean to be unkind," he continued, "but the only regret that I've heard you express is that you are to lose the *Albatross*."

"You know why I hate to lose her!" she broke in. "It's because I have some sentiment. It's because we have spent such wonderful, such happy hours together with her that it breaks my heart to see her pass to some one else!"

"Couldn't we have wonderful times again, even without her, Minna?"

The voice was quiet, but perhaps it was the weeping of the woman that gave it a pitiful, a wistful sound.

"How can we?" She raised a tear-stained face from a wisp of sandalwood-scented linen. "No! I see my duty," she said, "and I will do it. I can't remain in your life to be a burden on you, a stone around your neck. Without me you may be able to get somewhere again. I mustn't stand in your way!"

"Is that how you really feel about it?" he asked.

"What other way can I feel?" she said. "If you were thirty-eight, instead of fifty-eight, I might think I could help you, but as it is—" She rose to go. "Good-by."

"Is this really good-by?" he asked.

"Yes," she repeated, and moved to the door.

He made no attempt to stay her going.

She turned.

"I was right," she said. "You have no feelings. You can see me go out of your life without any more than 'Is this good-by?' If you were a man and loved me, you would find some way out of this mess. A man as big as you are can't be wiped out unless he is a coward and a fool! With your name and your genius for organizing, you could start again to-day, if you weren't such a quixotic idiot! In three months from now, less perhaps, you could be on your feet again, and if you did fail—well, you wouldn't be any worse off than you are now. Others have done it, are doing it all the time! Why not you?"

"I should make a bad business of the widows-and-orphans game, Minna," he returned quietly.

"Is that all you have to say?" She put her fingers on the handle of the door.

"I should like to repeat what you have heard me tell you so many times," he said slowly. "That with you I have found the greatest happiness of my life,

and I thank you for it from the bottom of my heart!"

The door clicked and he was alone.

For a second or two he sat, his elbows on the desk, his chin cupped in his hands. Except for a half-ironic elevation of his right eyebrow, there was nothing to betray his sensations or his lack of them. Whether his heart or his vanity or both had received a monstrous shock, or whether he was congratulating himself on an easy escape, none might tell.

He pulled out his watch, then walked to the window and opened it. The river breeze played with the vagrant breath of sandalwood which still hung upon the air. The odor of sandalwood was upon his hands, too, for had she not held them in hers for a brief space? His other eyebrow went up. He closed the window. He came back to his desk and picked up the telephone.

"Ask Mr. Ferguson to come here at once," he said.

The summons was answered promptly.

"Sit down, John." He waved his hand in the direction of a chair.

"You and I have been together for a long time, John," he commenced slowly.

Ferguson shifted uneasily in his seat.

"Going on twenty-five years, isn't it?" he continued.

The other nodded.

"Twenty-five years since you came to me from Wyanoake pits and started in at eight dollars a week. You could hardly count your dollars now, could you, John?"

"I've worked hard," muttered the other.

"Of course, of course! You deserve all you've got. You're a valuable man, a very valuable man! I've been thinking about you this morning. I'll tell you what I've been thinking of besides. I've been thinking that I'm strong enough to come back yet. You know

my ways. You've seen my methods of doing things and you know I always succeed in getting what I set out to get. Now, with you at my right hand, we can laugh in all their faces within a year. It may be hard sledding at first, but that won't be anything new to either of us, will it, John? We'll show these swine that they can't tread me out of existence. They've got me in a corner now, but I've got out of corners before, and by God, I'll do it again! What about it, John?" He held out his hand.

Ferguson rose stiffly to his feet.

"Before you go any further," he said, "I want to tell you that I signed with Finch this morning, and I can't have you say anything against him to me. I appreciate the kindness you've always shown me, but a man's got to look out for himself, and, after all, if I hadn't been a good card, I shouldn't have succeeded as I have. It's true that you gave me opportunities, but if I hadn't improved those opportunities, I shouldn't be where I am now. I've got a duty to my family, too, as well as to myself."

He stopped, but, receiving no comment, he went on.

"It's not your fault, of course, that this has happened. I understand that. And it's not your fault that you're too old to start all over again. But facts are facts, and when Finch told me a week ago that he'd like me to stay on with the organization, I felt that I had to accept. Of course, if there's any way I can do you a favor without being disloyal to the new board of directors, I'll do it."

The other man rose.

"No, thanks, John," he said simply. "I've never accepted favors from any man."

Ferguson walked awkwardly to the door.

"Well, if that's the way you feel about it," he said sulkily, "I've nothing more to say." He waited for a mo-

ment or two and passed into the corridor beyond.

There's a long, long trail a-winding—

The refrain of the air which he had whistled so often that day stole out again upon the dim room. The sun's last shaft of light had faded some time ago, and lights were twinkling on the river. He looked again at his watch. It was six o'clock. He pulled on his coat and drew on his gloves, glanced cursorily around the familiar walls, and passed out of the office which had been his throne room, his seat of government, for twenty-five years.

As he walked along the private passage, on his way to the elevator, he passed the room occupied by the telephone operators. The door was open. One girl, a pencil stuck in her frizzled hair, was lounging against the wall, hands on hips and abdomen protruding, in a conscious attempt to emulate the most outré fashion that has ever afflicted a blasé and hysterical feminine community. She was carrying on a laconic conversation with another young miss.

"Serve him right," said she of the fashion plate. "Let the young ones have a chance, I say! He's had everything his way long enough, and Mr. Finch is awful good looking, I think. He ain't married, neither," she added.

"Just the same, I think Finch done him a dirty trick!" returned the other. "Sold him, that's what he done! And after all he done for Finch, too! Then there's that Ferguson," she went on. "When he came to the old man, he didn't have a bean! Nor did Finch, either, for that matter. The old man made them both, and I heard to-day that Ferguson's going to stay on as Finch's right-hand man. I think it's a damned shame!"

The words came clearly along the passageway. The "old man" involuntarily raised his head.

"Aw, hell!" snapped the lady of the protruding abdomen. "They only done what any one would a done in their place. I'm off home."

Snatching a hat and coat from where they had been lying on the back of a chair, she proceeded to throw, rather than put them on.

"I'm a jazz baby, a big jazz baby!" she trebled raucously.

"Sh!" warned the other. "You know how mad the boss gets if he hears anybody sing in the office."

"Boss! Boss, did you say?" giggled the offender. "He ain't the boss no more. I'm as good as him any day! I'd like to see him send some one and tell me to stop! He won't give no more orders around here no more! Hee, hee, hee!" And she giggled again. "Well, so long!"

She reached the elevator just as the subject of her derision had pressed the button. He raised his hat courteously as he waved her into the cage ahead of him. Arrived at the lower floor, he wished her "good night."

"And good-by, Miss Ware," he added.

With a contemptuous curl of her lip, she looked him up and down.

"My name's Wright, not Ware," she said, and passed on out of the building.

He stood at the curb, but nothing resembling his car did he see. He looked at his watch again. Yes, it was five minutes after six. It should have been here five minutes ago.

The evening was setting in raw and cold, and a cough which had been troubling him lately began to annoy him with its steady persistence. Above the roar of the traffic, he could hear the cries of the newspaper boys in which his name figured more than once.

The commissioner, exchanging confidences with the man from next door, who had sneaked in for a moment's relaxation and excitement,

jerked a thumb in his direction and remarked:

"He just don't seem to care. He come in this morning as bold as brass, and there he stands as if he still owned the place, and all by hisself, too. I wonder what he's crossing the street for!" This last, as the ex-steel magnate started for the other side.

From this point of vantage, he looked up and down the opposite line of automobiles. Once his gaze rested upon the structure that had sheltered his activities for a quarter of a century. It was strange that it should pass to other hands, that any other brain but his, which had conceived and fathered the whole gigantic enterprise, should, in the future, direct its energies.

He recrossed the street and entered the building. If he had to wait, he might as well wait inside, out of the cold.

"Seen my man?" he asked of the commissionaire.

"No, I ain't," replied that worthy.

The use of the customary 'Sir' and the usual hurrying to forestall his slightest wish, were conspicuously absent.

"Maybe he's stopped somewheres for a game of pinochle," the man remarked familiarly.

Twenty minutes passed, one by one, and a dark-blue, expensive-looking car drew up to the curb. Laconically the chauffeur leaned forward in his seat and opened the door, the commissionaire's attention being engaged for the moment in helping an elderly gentleman adjust his scarf, preparatory to making his way to his car. This plutocrat was, for the time being, firmly established in his plutocracy and therefore entitled to attention.

"How does it come that you are half an hour late?"

The chauffeur, without touching his hat, as had been his wont during his long régime, growled a surly and un-

intelligible answer, slammed the door, and started the car with a jerk which threw its occupant to the opposite end of the carriage.

With that peculiarity of chauffeurs which causes them to take out their personal grievances on their employer's property, he whizzed up William Street and on to Park Row, once narrowly escaping running down a woman with a baby in her arms, who, like most women who cross roads with or without babies in their arms, was looking neither to the right nor to the left, but, intent on nothing in particular, was ambling across the street, oblivious of the traffic. Perfunctorily he turned his head in the direction of the speaking tube, but, disregarding the "Can't you look where you're going? Do you want to be handed a ticket?" which came from the inside of the car, he dashed on and into Fourth Avenue.

He'd show him that in these days a workingman had self-respect, was as good as the man he drove. He wouldn't take orders—why should he? Especially from a man who had gone broke and wasn't entitled to any respect at all. He was leaving on Saturday, anyway. How dare any one have the nerve to kick because he was a few minutes late? Was he a slave, obliged to be at any given place at any given time? Well, things were changing—had changed. It was the people, in the future, who would give orders, and the employers who would have to knuckle down and obey.

The idea of his employer's humiliation was very sweet. The fact that this particular employer had at one time been a pit boy at five dollars a week—the chauffeur's remuneration was thirty-five dollars a week—did not occur to him at all.

He hated all forms of authority, he despised the idea of obedience, as far as he was concerned, although, of course, the petty tyranny he exercised



over the second and third chauffeurs was a very natural and laudable prerogative.

In and out of the traffic, scratching a mud guard here and a rear tire rack there, he sped along. A heavy truck going east, driven by a gentleman who could see no good reason why he should give place to the driver of a luxurious motor car, even if the other had the right of way, decided, as there was no traffic policeman on guard, to show the son of a dog that a truck driver was as good as anybody.

A crash, the sound of splintering glass, and both vehicles grotesquely gave the lie to the theory of the brotherhood of man.

Out of the rapidly gathering crowd escaped the owner of the more leisurely car. He was very tired of the sound of his name. Why did people have to have names? He climbed into a taxi and sank back in the seat. The lights which flickered by the windows touched his face now and then. It was immobile as ever. There was no sign upon it that he had just escaped within an inch of his life. His right eyebrow was slightly elevated and ironically arched, but that was an almost permanent habit with him.

At Forty-second Street he found himself whistling "The Long, Long Trail" again. It was a pretty tune. He liked it.

At his house he paid the driver, tipped him twenty-five cents, and bade him a cheerful good night.

"Is your mistress at home?" he asked the man who opened the door.

On being told that she was in her boudoir, he ascended the stairs. He knocked at the door and entered the room.

Dora was lying on a lounge, propped up with pillows. Her pale eyes were puffed and swollen with crying.

Dora, the second, his seventeen-year-old daughter, was administering smell-

ing salts and other nostrums amid the sniffs and snivels of her maternal parent, who broke into fresh tears at the sight of her husband.

"So you've come at last!" she moaned. "Didn't you get my message? I've been calling and calling you since ten o'clock. I think it's outrageous, letting me learn a thing like this through the newspapers!"

"I've been thinking of telling you several times during the last couple of weeks, Dora," he said simply, "but I didn't see any use upsetting you until I was positive there was no way out. Your nerves are not strong, and I kept on hoping that things would right themselves and that there would be no necessity to bother you, after all. It came, at the last, sooner than I expected and, of course, the fool newspapers had to get out an extra."

"What are we going to do?" wailed his wife. "What will happen to the poor boys? What will happen to me?"

"The boys have had a good education—something I never had; and, after all, it won't be a bad idea to let them stand on their own legs. As for your future, I know ten thousand dollars a year will seem small, after what you've been accustomed to, but, at any rate, you won't starve. I'm glad I had the foresight to settle that on you when we were married. They can't touch that. That's yours."

"You talk the most ridiculous nonsense!" returned his wife. "How do you expect me to exist, much less live, on a paltry sum like that? How do you think I am going to marry the girls off?"

Dora, the second, banged the salts bottle down upon the glass-covered table.

"Oh, don't bother about me!" she said. "I don't want to be dependent on anybody. I dare say, with all this notoriety which father has been able to bring on us, I can easily get a job



in vaudeville or moving pictures!" She stamped noisily from the room, slamming the door with a force which made all the scent bottles and other gimcracks dance a *marche funèbre*.

Dora, the elder, sniffed and dribbled.

"How you could allow such a thing to happen passes my comprehension! I thought you were a good business man. Here am I at thirty-nine, tied for the rest of my life to the biggest failure in America. After all these years, for *this* to happen! I have given up the best years of my life for you! I've overlooked your faults and I've never flinched when people have wondered how I ever came to marry an ex-pit boy."

The ex-pit boy put up his leonine paw to wipe away something that trickled warmly down his neck. How did blood come to be on his hand? Oh, yes, he remembered now. It must have been caused by the flying glass, when his car struck the other. Funny he hadn't noticed it before! He took out his handkerchief and dabbed the wound gently.

Dora, catching sight of the scarlet stains, shrieked in terror.

"What's that? What have you done?" she screamed.

Her husband apologetically shrugged a shoulder.

"We had a slight accident on the way home. I suppose I got hurt," he said absent-mindedly.

"Accident! What kind of an accident? Is the car damaged? I suppose, since we are to lose everything, that doesn't matter now," sobbed his wife. "I begged you not to take my car this morning. You could have done with one of the open cars until your new one was delivered. I suppose it's smashed to atoms!"

"It's pretty well busted up, I'm afraid, Dora," he said. "I'm sorry, but my cough was troubling me this morning and I was afraid to risk it in

the open air." He drew another handkerchief from his pocket.

"Can't you go and get it stitched up or something?" she broke in. "You know how ill it always makes me to see blood. You have no respect for my feelings at all. Can't you say something?"

"What is there to say, Dora?" The phrase seemed familiar.

"Say—say!" she raged. "I want you to show some regret, some sorrow for me! But there! What can one expect from an ex-pit boy? You would see me dead at your feet and you wouldn't shed a tear. Not a tear! Well, this is the end. I won't stand it any longer! I'm a young woman. I'll have a divorce. Go out of my room!" She raised herself on her couch and shrieked at him like a fury.

"I'm sorry, Dora," he said, and quietly closed the door on his wife's hysterical ravings.

He went into his study and turned on the light which stood on his desk. He glanced at the clock. Just time to write a note before dinner. The thought of dinner was pleasant. He was hungry. He had been too preoccupied that day to think of lunch. But before dinner he would write to Bob Wagstaff.

Bob and his wife had been his only close, his only intimate friends, for more years than he could count. He'd write and tell Bob the whole story. He'd ask Bob if he had sufficient confidence in him to throw in his lot with his. He whistled the first few bars of his favorite tune and selected a pencil from one of many which lay, all pointed and ready, on his desk.

His one great eccentricity was centered in his pencils and his pens, fountain pens. Every morning they were prepared, either sharpened or filled with ink, and woe betide the unlucky secretary, should he bungle or omit this rite!

Drawing a sheet of paper before him, he started his letter. It was another peculiarity of his that he always wrote personal communications with a pencil, afterward signing them with a pen.

For a full ten minutes he wrote. Then he read and reread what he had written. He whistled again, as he put out his hand for the pen.

His secretary entered with a telegram.

"This came for you this morning. They told me at the office that you were not to be disturbed, but, as it seems to be important, I thought I'd bring it to you now." He placed the yellow envelope on the desk and withdrew.

Tearing it open hastily, he read with unbelieving eyes:

Bob died last night.      Appendicitis.  
    MARY WAGSTAFF.

The man sat for a moment gazing into space; then, slowly tearing the yellow sheet across, he dropped it into the wastebasket. The freshly written letter he also tore.

Well, he must write a note of condolence. Poor Mary Wagstaff! He wished he might be there to comfort her. She had adored Bob so passionately. What would she do without him? Poor Mary! Poor Mary!

He took up his pen to sign the second letter. Once, twice, three times he essayed his signature. It made no impression on the paper, merely a sickly scratch. The pen was empty.

With a guttural and obscene string of oaths and a pounding of his enormous fist upon the desk, which sent all the paraphernalia quivering and rattling like castanets, he broke into a fury which was frightful in its intensity. Oath succeeded oath, curse succeeded curse. The veins stood out in great thick cords upon his forehead. His breath came in violent and horrible sobs. A monstrous foam flecked his thick lips. His huge shoulders shook terribly.

Jerking open a drawer, he drew out a Colt. A sharp report. He rolled over on the carpet. There was a tiny hole in his right temple.



## SELF-DESTRUCTION

I LEARNED the calculated laws behind  
 The dream that sat within the Poet's brain,  
 And men became automatons designed  
 To move in three dimensions down a plane.

I heard the pulleys of creation creak;  
 I saw the Artifice that shapes the show,  
 The pressure giv'n to make the puppets speak,  
 The hidden strings that dance them to and fro.

It seemed that everything then stopped for me;  
 Only the monstrous tick of time went on,  
 Echoing idly down eternity  
 From dawn to empty dawn!

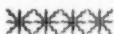
HARRY KEMP.



# Oil and Water

By Solita Solano

Author of "The Prior Claim," "Expurgated," etc.



NINA entered the room impulsively and held out her hand, palm up, a charming gesture she had copied from the Comtesse de Chateaubriand six years ago at Monte Carlo. The mannerism became her well, for was she not Señorita Rosario de Acosta y Rodriguez of Madrid, with all the distinction that might be expected to accompany that name? She was called Nina, for no reason at all.

Alexander Knight had been waiting twenty minutes. He hastily arose and accepted her hand with an awkward gesture because she was holding it so high. He shook it heartily and released it.

Nina laughed and began to draw on a long white glove.

"Oh, I forgot! Here the men do not kiss women's hands. Perhaps you are being strict with me because I'm not married." Her English was not quite perfect and was filled with delicious tones and subtle inflections.

Alexander smiled and blushed with embarrassment.

"Oh, I didn't know you wanted me to kiss your hand," he stammered.

"I beg your pardon. Did you say I wanted—" Nina's voice was a bit frosty. Americans were *gauche* sometimes! And Nina was abominably spoiled.

"Of course not." Alexander had turned scarlet. He held out a large bouquet of purple violets.

"I brought you these to wear," he said.

Nina regarded the flowers, and looked meaningfully down at her gown of black lace and sequins which revealed rather daringly her svelte boy's body, of which she was inordinately proud. Obviously, violets would not do. She glanced obliquely at Alexander and smiled from under arched brows. Apparently he had not noticed an incongruity for he was still waiting for her to accept the thick bouquet.

Nina gave an almost imperceptible shrug.

"Thank you," she said, and pinned the violets at her waist, turning to the blond American a back like polished ivory, flawless except for a round black mole beneath the right shoulder blade.

Nina felt astonished that Alexander had seen neither her hesitation nor the reason for it. So violets were the flowers he considered in harmony with her personality! Nina, who classed violets with buttercups and daisies, had worn no flowers except orchids and gardenias for ten years and this had been remarked in Madrid and Paris. And when one's selective tastes have been noted in European capitals it is annoying to have a man bring flowers suitable for a *jeune fille*.

Nina's maid came in, bringing a white fur coat. Nina turned to Alexander while she was being wrapped in the luxurious wrap and saw the adoration in his eyes. She suddenly melted and forgave him his *gaucherie*. After all, he was an American and she had heard that Americans and the English

did not understand women's moods and nuances as well as they did the stock market or cricket.

"Shall we go?" she asked, smiling. "As this is my first visit to New York opera, I do not want to miss any of it. I hope we're not late. I lingered over my dressing because—well, you can imagine that I wish to appear at my best!"

"I like to hear you say that. I have never known a woman as frank as you. It's—it's refreshing!" Alexander burst forth.

"Really!" said Nina, tilting back her head. She felt delighted that she could make this successful American man of affairs look and act like a schoolboy. As for her being frank—Nina suppressed a smile.

"We aren't late. They give 'Cavalleria Rusticana' first, I saw in the paper. 'Coq d'Or' doesn't begin till half past nine. That's the new one," explained Alexander.

The maid rang for the elevator and pushed Nina's collar a bit higher in the back. She had an unerring eye for those details which make all the difference between smartness and dowdiness. Nina surveyed herself in the elevator's glass panels as they descended. Her hair, shining like the wing of a raven in the sunlight, was wound smoothly about her shapely head. Her eyes, brown and large, were unusually brilliant from excitement and she had encircled them with a faint blue pigment to exaggerate their size. Her nose was somewhat aquiline and gave her face an expression of faint hauteur—that challenging look which empowers certain women who possess it to inspire more desperate passions than would otherwise be warranted. Nina's lips were a shade too thin. But they were beautifully shaped and naturally red. They parted with a satisfied sigh now, as she took her eyes from the mirror. Yes, she was beautiful and

would be until she was forty. There would be fifteen years yet of triumphs, she reflected, as she stepped across the snowy sidewalk to Alexander's car.

"Is it far?" asked Nina, as she settled herself in a corner, turning half-way about so that she might watch Alexander as they talked.

"About twenty blocks," he told her.

"Then I have time to smoke. Will you open my little bag and see if I have my cigarettes? No, not one of yours, please. I like only a certain brand made for me at Cairo and perfumed. Just a soupçon of perfume. Do not pull your eyebrows together like that. I am not going to make you take one."

Nina was genuinely amused at the idea of this strong man's terror of a perfumed cigarette. She laughed while he searched in the jeweled evening bag for her tiny case. She liked to see his big, clumsy fingers among her gold boxes, scent bottles, and wispis of lace handkerchiefs. She watched the effect on him of her subtly penetrating perfume as it rose to his nostrils, and was pleased when his fingers, holding a match for her cigarette, trembled slightly.

Nina, who had always sworn to marry an American or an Englishman, had been in New York a month and had already selected Alexander Knight for her future husband. He had not yet asked her for this mark of especial favor, but she knew that inevitably he would not prove different from all other men she had known.

Beauty and charm aside, Nina was a good match. Her social position was unquestioned even on the Continent where many an eyebrow was raised because of her independence of conduct and speech. Since the death of her parents five years before, Doña Josefa, her fiercely respectable aunt, had stopped any harmful gossip by her invariable companionship. It was not known,

however, that Doña Josefa, who had been born with grasping fingers, had made her niece pay their weight in gold for the indiscretions she pretended to countenance. Doña Josefa spoke to the world of "my niece's American ideas" as if they amused her, and she concealed from every one the horror which raised the hairs under her old red wig.

Nina had always adored Anglo-Saxons, especially Americans, since she was fifteen years old. At that age she had been taken from a convent she had hated—at the request, it must be said, of the mother superior—and had been given an English governess. At fifteen Nina had either adored or hated people. In two days her family had been relieved to find her adoring the governess and applying herself to her studies. But in a year the child's love for Anglo-Saxon freedom had developed so rapidly that Miss Burke was sent away and a French governess engaged.

It was then the family had learned what it was to cope with Nina. She had refused to speak any language but English. "If I am to be taught, and I suppose I *must* be, let it be in English!" she had declared. A Swiss woman who spoke English had been brought to Madrid. Nina had declared her accent atrocious. "I will speak only English and good English!" she had cried.

Her own tongue she had considered far too simple to be interesting. French was all very well on occasion. She had already learned it in the convent. Russian? Ah, yes, an extraordinary language—subtle and spitting! Italian? Under no circumstances! One might as well be speaking Spanish. German? It was a travesty on her beloved English. Ah! How she adored English! The family had yielded.

At eighteen Nina had clamored to be taken to London or New York. Anywhere, she had begged, where she

could have English in her ears on all sides and where there would be people whose every action was not based on the precedence of convention. She disliked Latin men, she had said, and would never marry a man of her own race. They were small of stature, while she desired a vertible viking, with a physique of steel and a will of iron—a man who glowed with health and took cold tubs every morning shortly after sunrise. In three words, virility, integrity, and fidelity were the qualities Nina fancied every Anglo-Saxon possessed. These daily utterances had become a litany with her, and at that charming age one may have a litany without boring any one except one's family.

At twenty Nina's father had died and her mother had fallen ill, surviving her husband but a few months. Nina had then come into the family estates—and aunt Josefa.

Doña Josefa really had earned all Nina had given her. As a constant and suffering companion, she had had no life of her own, no peace of mind, and all the discomforts of continuous traveling. Though by nature the sort of person who likes to think for two months about going somewhere and then take a fortnight to prepare for the journey, aunt Josefa had learned to catch a train leaving in two hours for almost any point in France, Italy, Switzerland, or even Russia. She had been almost a slave to her niece's whims and caprices.

Only on one point was Doña Josefa firm. She would not set a foot on English or American soil. Nina's coaxings, threats, and tears had failed to move her. Anglo-Saxons were not only incomprehensible to her, but distasteful, as well. And Nina could not leave her without the risk of sacrificing her position—which she was far too worldly to do. So, for eight years Nina had done the Continent thor-

oughly and without once completely losing her heart. And no day passed but that she sighed for a land of blond giants to conquer.

Many conventional bars came down during the war. Nina had grasped the opportunity by both hands and had announced to her aunt that she was going to New York with an elderly woman whom she would call her social secretary for want of a better title. The social secretary, who could not spell even the simplest words in Spanish through a defect of memory from which she had suffered since childhood, could be a sort of chaperon, explained Nina to her aunt. The priceless maid would also be of the party, and what woman would not be safe with two such dragons? Neither of them spoke English? What a curious objection, and so like her aunt to think of it! Did Nina not know enough English for a dozen women?

Doña Josefa had capitulated.

"Well, don't let any one see anything that woman writes," she had begged.

"Still, there is no society in that wild country, anyway, and it will not matter so much if I am not with you. See everything as quickly as you can and return to Madrid by summer. I hope you write often. I dare say I shall find it very dull without you."

"But, *tía mía*, you have been praying for peace and quiet every night for eight years!" Nina had exclaimed.

"Yes, I know. Nevertheless, I have a feeling I shall be bored until you return," the old aunt had admitted.

After Nina had been in New York about a week she had found her American one day at tea. Sitting in the Waldorf with Enrique Hidalgo, a countryman with a banking business in New York, she had seen him nod to a tall, blond man a few tables away. Nina had been instantly attracted by his powerful frame and his northern type.

"Please introduce that man to me," she had asked Hidalgo, without inquiring the stranger's identity.

The Spaniard had been annoyed, but had brought Alexander Knight, millionaire of the steel industry, to her side. Nina had plunged into English at once and for a few minutes the Spaniard had flattered himself that all this was for the purpose of impressing him with her command of the language. Then it had been plain to him that Nina was really interested in the American. So Hidalgo had shrugged his shoulders and withdrawn.

Throughout the next fortnight Nina and Alexander, mutually attracted that first day, had met several times. Nina was fascinated with this new and unknown type which she had longed to study since girlhood. And as for Alexander, he had never dreamed that a woman existed who possessed the charm and *savoir faire* of Nina. To him she was a romantic figure from the Old World, full of surprises and quaint, adorable fancies. That he understood her not at all made her all the more desirable. She piqued his curiosity and thrilled all his senses. He had not known before that "respectable" women adopted the lures and graces of the *demimonde*. The women of his family did not enhance nature with blue and red grease paint. Nor did they smoke on the way to the opera and carry bottles of penetrating scent for the downfall of their escorts.

Nina was delighted that Alexander's hand shook a little as he held out the match for her cigarette. She admired his control and thought to herself, "These Americans are magnificent!" She knew that a Latin would long ago have taken her deliberate coquetry for an invitation to make an issue of their friendship.

Nina inhaled the perfumed smoke deeply and watched Alexander as he blew out the flame.



"Thank you," she said softly to his clearly cut profile. How stern he looked in the half light! How strong and noble!

Presently the car drew up at the entrance of the Metropolitan. Alexander stepped out. Nina, smiling to herself, loosened the violets and dropped them to the floor. Then she accepted Alexander's hand and alighted.

Alexander was not a subscriber to the opera season. But one can always secure a box if one pays enough. The chorus was singing "*A casa, a casa*" as the usher led them into their box in the second tier. Nina, who loved music, drew a deep breath of contentment as she removed her coat. She smiled at Alexander, the intoxication of the music already in her eyes.

"Where are your violets?" Alexander asked suddenly in an alarmed voice.

"Violets?" repeated Nina, returning to the realm of practical things. "Violets? Oh, yes. Why, I must have dropped them!"

"That's too bad. I'll go look for them. Perhaps they are in the car. If I can't find Jevons, I'll go to a florist's near by."

"Please don't trouble," said Nina.

"Oh, it's no trouble!" said Alexander.

"No. I don't wish to be left alone," invented Nina. She began to feel rather annoyed. She turned her back to him and gave all her attention to the stage until the curtain fell on "*Cavalleria Rusticana*."

In the intermission Nina looked over the audience. The American type was to her still the most interesting thing in America. She leaned toward Alexander.

"Your women are beautiful, and better dressed than the Parisians!" she said.

"They aren't a patch on you!" returned Alexander ardently.

Nina looked surprised.

"Patch?" she inquired doubtfully.

"That's complimentary. It's slang, I suppose. I mean they are not so good looking as you."

Nina's face fell. Above everything, she liked subtle compliments. No one had ever paid court to her before in argot.

"Oh!" she said coldly. "You are really too kind!"

"Oh, no, I'm not," said Alexander warmly. "I mean every word of it."

Nina did not reply. The first notes of the Golden Cock's warning were blaring out like a challenge. The overture had begun. Nina sat motionless and entranced through the first act, her sense thrilling and rejoicing in the sensuous Russian music.

"Thank you, thank you," she said to Alexander, clasping her hands. "I can't tell you what pleasure you have given me by taking me to-night. Oh, I do hope they're not long back there! I want the next act to begin."

"They shouldn't be long," replied Alexander. "You noticed what light scenery they have for this opera. But then, I suppose they didn't want to spend much money on it. I should have thought they would have got a real horse for the king instead of that ridiculous painted one, wouldn't you? It would only cost ten dollars a performance, I imagine."

Nina could not think what to reply. Was this American humor?

"Do you like the music?" she asked.

"To tell you the truth, I don't know much about the operas," said Alexander. "I've always been so tired at night that I've gone to the club for a game of cards or to a musical comedy. I saw '*Girls Will Be Boys*' the other night. That has very good music. Once I saw '*Rigoletto*,' and when I was in college I suped in '*Carmen*' with Calvé. I liked '*Carmen*' pretty well. Have you heard that?"

"Fifteen or twenty times," said Nina. "I know the scores of nearly

all the operas." She turned away her head and wondered why it was that the men abroad were never too tired to attend the opera. But, of course, they did not work so hard during the day! Nor did they make several million dollars before they were forty, was Nina's afterthought.

On their way uptown in the car she was silent.

"Are you tired?" asked Alexander.

"No. I'm steeped in that wonderful music. I'm hypnotized by it. His 'Scheherazade' does the same thing to me."

"Whose what?"

"Rimsky-Korsakoff, I mean. The Russian who wrote 'Coq d'Or.' Oh, if he had only set Pierre Louys to music! What a combination! Can you imagine it?"

"I don't know," said Alexander miserably. "I must be tiresome for you to hear music with, I guess."

Nina looked at him and suddenly felt sorry that he had missed so much. She put her gloved hand on his impulsively.

"No, my friend. I like being with you," she said.

"Do you really mean that?" Alexander clutched her hand in a painful grip. "You don't know how I like being with you! If I only dared I would—I would ask—" He gulped and hesitated.

"Say it," she whispered.

"Will you marry me?" His honest eyes sought hers, filled with doubt for his temerity.

"Yes, I will, Alexander," said Nina softly.

He crushed her in his strong arms and kissed her.

"Ah, Alexander, there is another art you lack!" thought Nina. But she was glad. Here was indeed integrity, virility, and, quite probably, fidelity. The abstract virtues of her litany were embodied at last in flesh and blood.

With a sigh of content Nina lay back in Alexander's strong arms.

The next evening they were to dine together. Alexander, who had telephoned three times during the day, arrived at Nina's hotel half an hour before he was due and an hour before she expected him. In consequence, he waited for her forty minutes, and when they arrived at the Ritz their table was gone.

"I save the table until half past seven," said the maître d'hôtel. "I think monsieur no come. I grieve to another party."

"You should have known enough to save it," growled Alexander.

Nina bestowed on the unhappy man her most brilliant smile.

"You were quite right to give it away," she said.

"Thank you, madame." The maître d'hôtel bowed low.

"It was your fault," Nina said, as they returned to the car. "Do you not know I am always late? Do you think I am a train to be on the minute of the hour? *Quelle bêtise!* Am I like a business appointment?"

"Would you care to go to the Waldorf?" asked Alexander formally.

Nina, who had expected him to apologize or to laugh, shrugged her shoulders.

"To me one place is the same as another," she said.

They drove to Thirty-fourth Street in silence. Nina waited for Alexander to ignore the incident and to make love to her. But he had evidently taken it all *au grand sérieux*. He did not smile until they were seated at the table.

"Anchovies, sweetbreads *sous cloche*, and a salad," said Nina.

Alexander thawed.

"Is that all?" he asked.

"It would be fatal to eat more," said Nina, indicating her waistline.

Alexander threw back his head and roared with laughter.

"I wish you would talk to my sister and mother," he said. "They never exercise, they eat everything, and they groan about their fat from morning till night. They will be back from Florida next week. I sent them a telegram this morning and a letter this afternoon. About us, you know."

Nina nodded. So the mother and sister of Alexander were fat and never exercised! She looked closely at her fiancé across the table. Faintly outlined contours about the jowls indicated that he, too, would soon be overweight. Moreover, his coat was tight in the shoulders and his waistcoat was tugging at its buttons. Nina sighed. She would have to oversee his diet, she thought, as she heard him order a thick soup, steak, potatoes, cauliflower with Hollandaise sauce, and ice cream.

"I know they will love you," went on Alexander. "They may not understand you at first, and perhaps it would be better for you not to—to—well, just the first time, I mean, that you meet them——" He floundered.

"What on earth are you talking about, Alexander?" inquired Nina sweetly.

"I mean the rouge and that funny blue stuff on your eyes," said Alexander. He was plainly uncomfortable.

Nina sat up straight and her brown eyes flashed.

"My dear Alexander, my appearance has been highly praised in Europe and my good taste in such matters never questioned. Do you want me to look and act like a bourgeoisie? Well, I cannot do it. I tell you at once that it is out of the question." Her bosom rose and fell with emotion.

"If your mother and sister do not like my appearance, they can fix their eyes upon some other object at hand."

"Please, Nina, please!" begged Alexander. "I didn't mean to offend you. Of course you are to do as you please about it. But I thought you ought to

know that Americans—especially the old-fashioned kind—are peculiar about some things."

Nina thought of aunt Josefa and had to smile. "I suppose there are some people like that in every country," she admitted.

At this moment Alexander looked across the room and bowed, not too cordially, to a full-blown young woman whose red-gold hair was piled up in an elaborate coiffure of puffs and curls. His bow was returned a bit frostily, Nina thought. She determined to find out who the pretty woman was and why her bow had been so cold. But she asked no questions. Nina was far too clever to ask questions.

"What a pretty girl!" she exclaimed ingenuously, as she took an anchovy on her fork.

"Um," returned Alexander, intent upon his soup.

"She looks very intelligent, too," Nina went on.

"Intelligent? Well, I don't know about that," said Alexander.

"Perhaps she isn't. I only said she looked so," explained Nina.

"Oh, I don't say she is not. I never thought much about it. You see, she is a friend of Laura's—my sister—and she is always at our house."

"I see," put in Nina. "And since you met me you haven't seen much of her. Am I right?"

Alexander grinned.

"To tell the truth, I had forgotten all about her," he said. "My business takes nearly all my time. And you have been taking a lot of it, too. I was so afraid you wouldn't take me that I thought about you all the time. But now I know it is all right, I can give more time to the office."

Nina could not believe her ears.

"Your office?" she repeated. "Does your office need you? I thought you had a successful business. Have you not enough money for all your needs?"

"An office would soon go to pot if the owner did not watch it closely," declared Alexander. "And besides, I love the work. I wouldn't know what to do with myself if I didn't have my office."

"Well, I'll change all that," said Nina firmly. "What about my mornings and afternoons? I adore morning musicales and lectures. And in the afternoon I go to exhibitions and galleries and give gay tea parties. Naturally, I shall want you with me." She smiled. "At least, at first."

"Musicales? Exhibitions? Exhibitions of what?"

"Many things. Paintings, etchings, sculpture, prints—and other very charming things, my dear Alexander. Some will be good—perhaps. Others will be atrocious. But we shall be interested and amuse ourselves well, never fear."

"But I don't know one darn thing about any of those subjects!" cried the dismayed Alexander.

"I shall teach you, then, something of all of them. In that way you will learn the art of living," said Nina. "You have earned a rest and a reward from all your labors."

Alexander said nothing. He looked glumly at Nina. She smiled intoxicatingly into his eyes until he leaned across the table and caught her hand.

"I'll do anything for you," he said.

"Anything? Then give me my bag to begin with. I want a cigarette," she said lightly. "Also some coffee."

While Alexander was occupied with the waiter, Nina glanced over at the table where the blond woman sat. As she had thought, the woman was watching them.

"Pink chiffon is so bad for complexions and plumpness," said Nina aloud.

"What?" said Alexander, blinking.

"Nothing, *cher ami*. I am only thinking of the trouble I took for you

to-night—getting into this tight gown. And you have said nothing about it."

Alexander looked with unseeing eyes at the cloth-of-gold dress Nina wore so imperially.

"I never notice women's clothes," he said.

"In Paris, husbands—and lovers—go to the shops and help select becoming models." Nina's tone was sad.

"They must be awful fools!" said Alexander contemptuously.

"On the contrary, they are charming men!" flared Nina. "Come, I want to go home now."

They drove to her hotel. Nina felt chilled and nervous. As they were stopping at the door, Alexander asked:

"May I come up to say good night?"

"Really, I'm very tired," said Nina.

"Then I'll kiss you here," he declared, and seized her about the waist.

"No, no!" cried Nina to no purpose. She struggled and her hair caught in a button of his sleeve, loosening a long lock.

"Alexander! You have hurt me!" she said in an angry tone. "And my coiffure is ruined. How can I go into my hotel? Tell the chauffeur to drive around the block. How stupid you are!"

She wove the long strand into place. Alexander watched it curling about her fingers like a black snake.

"You must never kiss me when I tell you not to. I cannot bear to be pulled about," said Nina, recovering herself. She looked into Alexander's hurt eyes.

"But you told me you liked masterful men who made you feel their strength!" Nina saw that Alexander was resenting the rebuke. She took his hand.

"I do, I do indeed, my Hercules. But only when I want to feel their strength, I think." She laughed banteringly. "I'll tell you when I am in the mood, I assure you."

The car, having made the circuit of

the block, drew up once more at the hotel.

"Good night, ravisher of women. No, don't come in with me. And send me some orchids in the morning, won't you?"

"I sent you violets this morning. I see you're not wearing them. Didn't they arrive?" asked Alexander stiffly.

Nina crinkled her brow in thought.

"Why, let me see. This morning? I don't believe they did, Alexander. Perhaps my maid was careless about them. I shall have to speak to her."

Nina blew him a kiss and ran up the steps.

"These Americans need much training," she thought, as she waited for the elevator.

Nina was on the Riviera in a beautiful new costume when the telephone rang the next morning at half past nine. She made a hasty return to her New York hotel and sat up in bed. Outside she heard the voice of the priceless maid who knew no English.

*"Pas possible parler avec madame! Comprends pas. Quoi? Je dis que madame dort."*

"I was sleeping. Now I am not," called out Nina. "Come here, Justine. Who asks to speak to me?"

"I don't know. Not one word did I understand except Mees De Acosta. I think perhaps it may be the American fiancé of mademoiselle," replied Justine, opening the door. Nina saw that she was trying not to smile.

"Shall I put back the telephone?"

"No. As I am awake, I may as well speak to him," said Nina, slipping from between the warm sheets. The cold air from the windows blew through her chiffon garment as she thrust her feet into the satin mules by her bed.

"Justine! I am cold. Quick!" cried Nina, her teeth beginning to chatter. She stood shivering while the maid closed the windows and brought a silk and fur boudoir coat. Holding this

tightly about her throat, Nina paused at the dresser and took up her lip stick. Two dabs on the upper lip, one on the lower, and she spread the wet rouge with the tip of her little finger, turning her head from one side to the other to judge the result. She passed her powder puff over her nose and cheeks and sprayed herself with a gold atomizer which held the perfume which a famous Paris house had blended for her exclusive use. Then she yawned, sighed, and walked through the door to the telephone.

"Does some one want Miss De Acosta?" she drawled.

"Yes. Is this you, Nina?" It was Alexander's voice, brisk and hurried.

"Ah, good morning, *cher ami*. I am very, ve-ry angry with you this morning."

"Angry? What for?" inquired Alexander, clipping his words.

"You wake me up so early and then ask me what for!"

"Early? You call this early? It's nearly ten o'clock and I'm already at the office." Alexander's tone was righteous.

"Since I am awake, will you please tell me what you had to say?" asked Nina coldly.

"I wondered if you would care to drive out to my place in the country. It's a beautiful day! There may be some improvements you could suggest for the house. What do you say?"

Nina considered. She hated to drive in the country in winter. But this was clearly a duty.

"Yes, Alexander. Let us drive in the country. And when we return will you take me to hear that mad musician, Prokofieff? He's giving a recital to-day."

"I'm sorry, Nina, I can't do that. I have a directors' meeting at three o'clock. Can you be ready in half an hour?"

"But no!" cried Nina in dismay.



"By twelve o'clock I shall be waiting for you."

"We can't go then," returned Alexander. "It's a long drive out. I'll come for you in an hour. Good-by." He rang off without waiting for Nina's reply.

"What a man, Justine!" exclaimed Nina. "So—so masculine! My bath, quickly. I have but an hour. Horror! I can never, never be ready!"

Nor was she. Alexander waited with a scowl in her reception room for nearly a half hour. But when she came in to him, glowing, perfectly groomed, and bewilderingly beautiful, his forehead smoothed itself out and he sprang to meet her with ardor.

"You are wonderful!" he breathed.

"That's better, Alexander," smiled Nina. "I am becoming so afraid of you that I feared a scolding for being late."

She buttoned her leopard coat and turned the collar up to her ears.

"Well, we'll have to hurry for a fact," said he, returning to its pocket the watch he had been holding in his hand. "Sometimes the traffic is heavy, you know, and it takes more than an hour." They crossed the lobby, every one turning to stare at Nina.

"To go and come, you mean?"

"No, each way. The house is quite a distance out. You will love it, Nina. The air is so pure and clear and the water runs direct to us from the reservoir a few miles away. And there is an irrigation system all ready to use in the gardens in case of drought."

"Drought? What is drought? I do not know that word."

"It means when there is no rainfall. You see, a certain amount of precipitation is necessary—"

"Oh, yes," said Nina, watching the crowds from the window. "How many apartments, Alexander?"

"My dear, this is not an apartment

house." He smiled indulgently. "This is one big house."

"I mean apartments for guests who are staying with us. Perhaps you call them wings."

"Guests? Oh, there are three or four guest rooms, I suppose. We never had much company when we lived there all the time. Don't worry, my dear. There'll be room always for any of your girl friends you ask to come and stay with you." Alexander reached over and took Nina's hand in its white-suede glove.

"Alexander, I think you do not know how to spend money," said Nina thoughtfully. "But I shall design you new rooms and arrange everything so you will think you are in Europe. We'll have something done in my own moods, Alexander. Something that all the world will ask to come and see. My apartment shall be mauve and orchid, with mirrors everywhere—even in the ceiling—and a Grecian bath—"

"Nina, Nina! We are simple people, my dear," broke in Alexander. His face wore an expression of concern and alarm.

"My mother and sister—they would not be accustomed to such things. They will live there with us in the summers, of course. They love the old place just as it is, just as my father had it built when we had less money than we have now. Do you need all those foreign things to make you happy, Nina?"

"No. I dare say we shall be abroad much of the time and I can have a house in Paris to design in my own ideas," she replied.

"When we're married you'll forget all that, Nina," said Alexander. "Sometimes cares come with marriage that change all our likes and dislikes."

Nina wondered what he was trying to say, but, having lost interest in the subject, did not ask.

"Is that directors' meeting really so



important? Couldn't you forget to go?" Nina purred in her most caressing tones.

"Not this time," said Alexander. "This is one of the most important meetings we have ever had. We're going to declare a forty per cent dividend this year of my principal company and——"

"I don't know what that means at all," interrupted Nina, "and I hope you never explain. I should be so bored! I hate business!"

"Nothing is as interesting as business when you understand about it," said Alexander enthusiastically. "Some day I will show you how simple and absorbing it is."

"Don't you like anything else? Have you no hobbies? But of course you have. Something very expensive, I dare say, like Ming vases or the ancient manuscripts of monks. Tell me."

They were speeding through Westchester now and Alexander pulled his blond brows together uncomfortably.

"No, I don't know as I have any hobbies. I like baseball and golf as well as anything. At night I'm tired and I go to a show or play stud poker with the men at the club. But I'm going to learn auction bridge next winter. You'd like that, and I'm sure you would learn it easily. But you must promise me not to gamble!"

Alexander shook a playful finger at Nina and her mind flew back to a night at Monte Carlo when a certain royal personage, eluding the vigilance of aunt Josefa, had slipped into her hand ten thousand francs to place on the zero, which did not turn up again that evening.

Nina smiled and her eyelids drooped a bit scornfully.

"I think I can safely promise never to gamble in our home," she said.

"I knew you'd say that," exclaimed Alexander, highly pleased. "And, if you like, I'll get a hobby. Can you

suggest a good one? You see, I have always looked at things this way: Make your pile while you're young and then you can travel and read later on."

"Do you think, then, that culture is something for one's old and idle years, my dear Alexander? Why, it is the work of a lifetime, I assure you. It is only after years of observation and comparison that one's taste is cultivated and pruned. Does one know a Botticelli from a Rafael, a Rembrandt etching from a Van Zorn, or a Kunisada print from a Hiroshige by walking two or three times in one's old age through an art gallery?"

"Those things are not important to me," said Alexander uneasily.

"Nor are literature, music, and languages, I gather," said Nina dryly. Alexander did not answer.

They turned off the main road and entered upon a lane that wound through an orchard.

"There, Nina, is the house," said Alexander, pointing through the leafless trees.

"It's hardly been changed at all since we were children. I had gardens made everywhere and put in all modern improvements, but I tried to keep everything looking just as it always has."

Nina leaned forward. Instead of the stately country home, spired or turreted, which she had pictured, there stood a remodeled farmhouse, large, to be sure, but utterly without appeal to the eye, painted in green and white. The gardens and their flowers were really beautiful, Nina thought, and began to plan a splendid new house on this propitious site.

"Mrs. Saunders, the caretaker, will take us through the rooms and give us a bite of luncheon. I telephoned from town," said Alexander. "How do you like it, Nina? Isn't it quaint and old-fashioned?"

"Yes, it is," she answered, and smiled

sweetly upon Mrs. Saunders, who was overcome by the beauty and leopard skins of the foreigner. The keys she carried on a ring rattled against each other as she opened doors, closets, and cupboards to display collections of linen and jams which were, of course, altogether incomprehensible to Nina.

Alexander drew Nina's arm under his as they followed the flustered Mrs. Saunders up the stairs.

"I wish you could know how I am looking forward to the day when you will be moving about this house with those keys in your hands," he whispered, pressing her arm.

Nina did not reply. For once she felt herself completely at a loss.

Having drawn Nina's attention to the bedrooms, done in chintz, Alexander paused before a door and waited until Mrs. Saunders had descended the stairs to prepare luncheon before he drew Nina inside.

"Look in here," he said in hushed tones.

Nina looked into a large, pleasant room with low ceilings. Two small beds, an old-fashioned cradle, a white dresser, and a little rocking-chair comprised the furniture.

"Oh, yes, I can surely do something with this room, Alexander," said Nina. "That is, if we decide to keep this house. It might be a breakfast room for rainy days, when we can't be on the verandas."

"No, dear," said Alexander gently. "Look again—carefully."

"What in the world do you mean?" asked Nina.

Alexander blushed scarlet and hung his head.

"Don't you see, dear, that this is the nursery?" he said in a low voice.

"Really?" drawled Nina. "How interesting! You and your sister played here when you were children?" She turned away, loosening the fur at her throat.

Alexander caught her hand.

"Yes. And, Nina, our—our——"

"Alexander! You are really too absurd!" Nina walked away, a tumult of emotions in her breast. Behind her came Alexander.

"I'm sorry, Nina. I thought it would be all right to speak of children, since we are to be married so soon. I had forgotten that some girls feel a certain modesty about discussing such things. But I couldn't help showing you that room which will play such a big part in our lives. You will probably want to spend much of your time out here after we are married. It will be so quiet and restful for you after all the years of rushing about from city to city."

Nina turned and faced Alexander.

"You say we shall spend most of our time here in the country?" she asked evenly.

"I think that would be best, dear. You know," he continued roguishly, "that the country air is very good for all small, growing things. Eh, Nina?" He put out his hand and pinched her cheek.

Nina's beautiful eyes narrowed until they looked like slits. She controlled with difficulty the tempest of rage which swept her.

"So, that is the plan you have made for me!" she said. "I, Rosario de Acosta y Rodriguez, who could have married titles in Spain or France many times over! I, whom they have begged to establish a salon in Paris to revive the wit and learning of other periods! You would take me from my milieu and place me here, in a barbarous country, with your fat mother and sister—to—to——"

Nina's voice grew shrill and broke. She looked at Alexander's honest face, its mouth and eyes wide with a look of wonderment at her outburst.

Then she laughed and relaxed her tense muscles.

"You are the most stupid man I have

ever met!" she said, shrugging her shoulders. "I suppose you can't help it. Well, take me back to town."

She strolled away toward the stairway. Her anger had passed. The episode was already closed to her. With her volatile temperament, she was already planning to catch the next boat to Bordeaux. She remembered that the steamers sailing direct to Spain were not comfortable, and they took a week or more to make the journey. Dear old aunt Josefa! She would be amused to hear about this romance.

They entered the motor in silence.

Alexander timidly put out his hand and touched Nina's white glove.

"Well, dear," he said, "I knew you were different from most women. Perhaps I should have realized that my kind of life would not appeal to you. We shall live in town, then, if you like."

Nina threw up both hands.

"Can you understand nothing, Alexander? It is finished with us! I am not going to marry you! We are not going to live *anywhere*!"

She looked at him and burst into a fit of silent, helpless laughter.

A week later Nina's arrangements for sailing had been made and she was having tea at the Ritz with Enrique Hidalgo, the banker, who was giving her advice and what money remained to her account.

Nina, leaning back and inhaling her perfumed cigarette, was enjoying the sensation of relaxed nerves and conversation. Ah, what it was to understand and to be understood!

And then she looked up to see Alexander pass their table, led by the maitre d'hôtel. A woman was with him—the woman with the elaborate curls and puffs who had bowed so coldly that

night at the Waldorf. Nina noticed at once that she was wearing an atrocious hat.

Alexander seated her opposite him and gave an order to the waiter. Then he leaned across the table toward her. She bent over toward him, breathing in every word. How at ease Alexander seemed to be! He was talking and laughing, comfortable in his banality and in the freedom from possible criticism. Nina had never seen him so happy and gay. She smiled.

After all, she thought, she really was *difficile*. She had always been told that. How Alexander had squirmed under her thrusts of scorn and derision! He had never been sure of himself or felt safe from her subtle attacks. And he really had taken it all rather well, she admitted to herself. Poor, stupid Alexander! It was just as well for him that she had broken off their engagement. He would have had a dreadfully unhappy life. And now he had returned to the woman who was fitted for him—who admired him openly. Nina gave one last sigh for her lost ideals, then smiled again.

"You are amused, I see," remarked Hidalgo.

"Very amused," answered Nina. Her eyes were still on Alexander.

"Oh," said Hidalgo, spreading out his hands. Nina couldn't help thinking that Alexander would have turned his head and insisted upon knowing at what she was smiling.

"You will not understand, perhaps, but the most amusing sight to me is a plump, fair-haired woman who wears a large—oh, a very large—bunch of purple violets."

And Nina laughed—a rippling, delicious little laugh, filled with delicious tones and subtle inflections.





# Woodland Magic

By Elmer Brown Mason

Author of "The Green Peanut,"  
"The Butterfly Man," etc.

JOHN STEWART laid down his ax and found a seat on a moss-covered rock. He held in his hand a V-shaped piece of wood, chopped from the trunk of the birch tree before him, and carefully began to count the layers of wood that it showed. "Sixty-one," he spoke aloud, the silent woods around him for audience. "Sixty-one. That would bring it back to eighteen-fifty-nine. Let's see now!" And he referred to an old map. "From the junction of the stream known as Shannon with the River Amanauck thirty-two northwest, thirty rods to a birch tree labeled with a crossed X. There's no question about it"—he made a somewhat lengthy note in his tally book—"it doesn't belong to the Spruce Lumber Company. But they'll cut it just the same. Wonder who Lucille de Coeur was, anyway," he mused. "Pretty name. Well, it's not my business." And the big young man picked up his ax, slipped a light pack on to his broad shoulders, and turned down the trail.

It wasn't the first time that John Stewart had been sent out to cruise and report on tracts that showed Lucille de Coeur as owner on the sixty-year-old survey. In spite of this, the timber was always cut, and whether the real heirs received any compensation for it or not was a matter beyond his knowledge. For a few moments the problem still held his mind, and then, with a shrug of the broad shoulders beneath the pack, he dismissed it entirely and gave himself up to a great

thankfulness for his surroundings, his freedom.

It was June. The woods were in their first summer green, still, silent with the tenseness of growing things. The world smelled fresh and new; from near by came the subdued murmur of a brook; far in the distance a tree went down with a muffled crash, the faint, long drawn-out cry of "Timber" barely preceding it.

John Stewart drew in a great breath of the sweet-scented air. What a contrast with three years before! The stillness of forest life for the ominous brooding of the trenches, the murmur of a brook for the rattle of machine-gun fire, the cheerful boom of the falling tree for the nerve-racking roar of high explosives. Yes, he was thankful, thankful, indeed, for what fate had given him—the woods with their healing tenderness, the woods, marred by the presence of no woman. A man's paradise! Here there was peace, despite from all mental agony.

His mind flew back to that frightful period after the war and before he had come home. The time when his very soul was aching for the quiet of the forests which he felt was never again to be his. It was a girl who stood in the way, a girl of the cities, to whom he had become engaged in that feverish time before his sailing for overseas. Of course, he had meant to carry it through; his manhood held him to his promise, but— Well, the war had changed so many things, taught him what was worth while in life, and this,

for him, included no woman. And then the blessed discovery that she, too, had changed her mind; that freedom was his! He played the game as the rules laid it down, acted the weebegone lover, and fled to the lumber woods, his heart singing the while a chorus of freedom. Now not a single problem harried him, and life was all happiness.

The trail took a sudden dip down to a broad brook flowing over mossy stones, its flood banks defined by drift caught in the bordering willows. Along this stream Stewart picked his way till he reached a large pond with a dam at the lower end. A crew of men were just shooting the last of the logs through a narrow sluiceway, their cries coming over the water. The timber cruiser stopped and listened. "Too much joy there, even for the end of the drive," he soliloquized, aloud as usual. "Must be some liquor or else Red O'Brien has been stewing up ginger again to make 'jakey.' Ugh!" he finished disgustedly, at the memory of his sole taste of the potent brew the lumberjack evolves, when he can procure no alcohol.

Stewart left the banks of the stream and made a wide circuit around the men. He was no coward, but his better sense showed him the futility of risking the quarrel which Red O'Brien was always ready to fasten on him. Farther below, he found the bank of the stream again and went down some three miles to the next dam. The buildings of the camp lay a quarter of a mile back from the river, and toward them he turned, intending to pass the night there, although he knew that the camp was deserted. They were the usual shacks: a long bunk house with the cook's quarters and kitchen at one end; a tiny house for the scalers; stables; a shed; a blacksmith's shop.

Smoke was curling out from the bunk-house door.

"Wonder who it can be?" the man asked himself, as he approached. He did not crave company. Swinging open the door without ceremony, he stopped, thunderstruck and resentful, at the tableau before him.

Clad in a brown corduroy skirt and a brown linen waist, a very pretty, very young girl was bending over the ancient stove, from every crack and crevice of which smoke eddied.

"Drat it!" she exclaimed furiously, turning the damper, with no diminution in the smoke which leaked from every joint.

The man laughed, in spite of his annoyance, at finding her there, and the girl whirling quickly, turned on him two eyes slightly reddened by the smoke, but without an atom of fear in their depths.

"Excuse me," he apologized hastily, "but that's a trick stove. Gets every one. You see, the damper is broken—the rod that turns it open, I mean. You have to push it from inside with a stick."

"I'm glad there is a logical explanation," she answered calmly, sitting down, while he poked inside the stove. "I was beginning to think that it was plain bewitched."

The smoke suddenly ceased, the fire woke to a noisy crackling, the young man fanned the room clear by opening and shutting the door rapidly. Then he took up the conversation where he had dropped it.

"No, it's a perfectly respectable stove, although somewhat along in years. Like many another sterling character, it takes its friends to appreciate it."

"I shall look on it as a very old and equally valued family servant," the girl answered, accepting his imagery. "And now, do you think it could be prevailed upon to cook our supper?"

"Thanks awfully for your invitation, but——" He hesitated, then thought



better of it. "I accept with pleasure. Let me see! I have some beans, and a loaf of bread, and some bacon, and a—"

"I have a can of clam chowder, ham, potatoes—six of them—and some cake," she interrupted, "and you are my guest."

"I beg your pardon." The man bowed formally. "I was about to add, however, that my larder also contained a partridge, requiring only the removal of the feathers to be broiled. It's a very fat partridge," he added ingratiatingly. His hostess was really amusing, he told himself. Only a child, at that.

"I'm fond of partridges," the girl admitted readily. "But aren't they out of season at this time of year? Isn't there some law against shooting them?"

"Yes," he agreed. "It's the breeding season. However, there are extenuating circumstances. I didn't shoot it—knocked it down with a stone, and it's a bachelor partridge, therefore of absolutely no value in the scheme of existence."

"If it had been a respectable spinster partridge, would you have made the same statement?" the girl asked somewhat sharply.

"Well—no," the man said, hesitating. "Though I might have offered the same excuse, but without the qualification. Spinsters are seldom for life like bachelors."

The girl gave him a long look before she answered. It was a strangely impersonal look, and seemed to hold a wisdom beyond her years. And though it was not exactly resentful, John Stewart felt uncomfortable beneath it.

"All men are hipped in some way on the subject of matrimony," she said finally. "It's a remnant of medievalism."

The fire was burning briskly. The man foraged out an ancient kettle and an iron pot, both so smoke-begrimed

that they might easily have passed for the principals in the historic accusations bandied between their ancestors, and filled both with water from a pail outside the door. When the water was boiling, he secured a large and battered tin pan, poured the contents of the kettle over the bird, and prepared to pluck it. The girl had risen to help in these culinary preliminaries, but the young man proceeded in such a matter-of-fact manner, without looking to her for assistance, that she resumed her chair.

"You seem to be a most competent person," the girl commented, examining her vis-à-vis with some trace of resentment.

"I am," he answered comfortably. "I do myself rather well, too. You see, I have no problems, simply enjoy my life all by myself. I can't quite understand, though, why nature has provided especially for twos, not for ones. I could not have eaten a whole partridge alone. With you to share it, there will be no waste."

"There's—there's a fallacy in the woodpile somewhere," the girl said, her cheeks growing slightly pinker. This young man was much too self-complacent and sure of himself. No problems—just happy by his lones! "Shall I put on the ham?" she queried abruptly.

"Yes, do," the man agreed, deftly dividing the partridge down the middle with a large clasp knife. "You'll find a frying pan in—in the oven probably. We'll broil the bird with it and the ham at the same time. I'll go and get some fresh water." He caught up the pail and disappeared into the gathering twilight.

Alone in the cabin, the girl swiftly reviewed the situation. She recognized its extreme unconventionality and rather gloried in it. The man was unquestionably a gentleman, her instincts told her, and she had nothing to fear



from him. He was good looking, too, in spite of his abnormal assumption of independence. Men weren't meant to be so independent. Unconsciously her hands rose to her hair to smooth it into shape; then, recognizing the instinctive purpose, she brought them down with a gesture of anger. How had he happened to come on to the scene, anyway, she asked herself. Was she not there for deep thought, to solve an important problem. "Hope he goes right after dinner," she said to herself, then added aloud, as if speaking to some one present, "It's a nuisance having him turn up, you know."

Stewart whistled as he approached the cabin with the full water pail. He wondered how the girl happened to be in the deserted lumber camp alone, but it was a wondering entirely devoid of curiosity. He accepted the situation without a question. Girls didn't interest him loftily. She was a very pretty one, though, and quite amusing. Strayed down from the hotel three miles away, probably. None of his business, anyway. He ceased his whistling and pushed open the door. The table was set with tin dishes and black-handled knives and forks. The girl was examining a tin cup with critical disapproval as he entered. She made no comment, however, but set it down on the table.

"Have you any sugar?"

"Sorry, but I haven't," he apologized. "I had some, but I fell in a brook and it melted."

"Tea is really much better without it," she announced philosophically. "The partridge looks scrumptious."

It proved to be that and more. The ham was done to a crisp, the tea hot and potent. The girl had butter for the bread, and finally produced a most delectable half chocolate cake. Both ate with the keen appetite of youth. The meal finished, the man fumbled in his side pocket.

"Yes, you may smoke," she answered his interrogative glance. "How about washing the dishes, though?"

"Oh, I'll wash 'em after you've gone," he answered comfortably. "There's a bench outside the door. Let's sit there."

The girl opened her mouth to reply and then, shutting in on her words, followed him out, to sit by his side silently. It was that time between twilight and darkness when the world fades quickly into the night. The man's pipe glowed and sank as the two young things sat motionless. It was very still, the murmur of the stream alone rising above the silence.

"It's a splendid old world!" Stewart spoke more to himself than to her.

"Yes, I suppose it is," she agreed, albeit somewhat grudgingly.

"Room for every one," he continued, "and every one can do exactly as he pleases, if he only makes up his mind to do it."

"That's not true," she flared back at him. "Girls can *not* do as they please. They—they generally have to get married."

"Don't they want to?"

"Certainly they do not—always."

"Then why should they?"

"If they don't—if they work—they grow into old maids and no one cares for them, and they grow plain and unattractive."

"It's a choice then between independence and attractiveness?"

"Now isn't that just like a man!" she apostrophized the surrounding darkness. "You don't understand *at all*! It's the fact that they *must* make a choice that's unjust."

"Don't men—most men have to make that choice?"

"They do not," she objected hotly. "They marry at any old age."

"But I thought marriage was generally considered a very desirable and beautiful thing."

"Why have you never married then?" she shot at him at a venture.

"Oh, I am—well, I'm different."

"Well, so am I," she said firmly.

"Then neither of us has anything to complain of."

"Haven't we?" she objected scornfully. "Let me put a hypothetical case to you."

"I'm only a simple timber cruiser and I'm not at all sure that I could judge properly of a hypothetical case."

"I'll risk you," she answered, and plunged recklessly ahead. "Suppose a girl had a guardian who was very rich and old—over forty—and she had some property which was worth nothing really. Then she found out that this guardian had been buying this worthless property from her a little at a time in order to give her money for her education and to live on afterward—the property being valueless, you understand. In other words, the man had been giving her money, in the nicest possible way, of course, but he was giving it to her just the same. Then the old guardian asked her to marry him. What would you do?"

"Tell him to go to—er—I wouldn't marry him."

"Suppose you hadn't any money, hadn't a chance to pay him back, and only earned a very little as a librarian?"

"I don't see why you should marry him, anyway. He gave the money with his eyes open and he has no business to expect a return."

"But I don't dislike him," the girl answered, forgetting her hypothetical case.

"You don't love him?"

"No, he's too old."

"Don't marry him then."

"You aren't much good as an adviser," she said with a sigh. "I came out here to solve my problem; then you turned up and I thought that you might be a kind of a Heaven-sent oracle. You aren't satisfactory, though."

"Didn't I give you the advice that you wanted to hear?"

"Yes," she acknowledged doubtfully.

"But just for that reason it can't be good."

"I don't quite see how you figure that out logically."

"Women don't need logic; they know," she answered calmly.

The man gave the trim young figure, just visible in the darkness, a glance of amazement, then he spoke apologetically:

"I'm awfully sorry that I could not help you with your problem."

"But you have."

"Then you've made up your mind not to marry him?"

"Certainly not! I haven't made up my mind at all. I'll have to think it all over very calmly before I do. Let's talk of something else, though. You might tell me your name, for instance, and what you are doing here. Mine's Lucy Decker."

"You don't happen to spell it De Coeur?" he asked, marveling at the coincidence.

"I don't. My grandmother did. Why?"

"I've seen it on an old survey."

"Yes, I own pieces of land around here. My guardian bought some from me, the way I told you, but none of them have any trees growing on them, so they aren't worth anything. I've often wished that there was just one little piece with a brook running through it and some trees. I'd build a tiny house there and live all by myself with a lot of books."

The man's mind was working rapidly. The tracts that he had seen on the old survey marked with the name Lucille de Coeur had always been heavily timbered, must have been worth a lot of money. Should he tell her about them? She was very pretty, very unsophisticated, but probably what was just "a little money" to her would be

a great deal to him. There was undoubtedly some explanation. Guardians did not rob their wards in the year nineteen hundred and twenty. No, he wouldn't tell her. It was none of his business, anyway.

"My name is John Stewart," he volunteered. "I cruise timber for the Spruce Lumber Company in the winter and spring, and loaf around the woods the rest of the time."

"Why, that's my guardian's company!" the girl exclaimed in surprise. "Does this camp belong to him, too?"

"Yes."

"I'm so glad. I was rather afraid that I was trespassing. You see, I slipped away from the hotel, leaving word that I had taken the train to Wells Junction and would be gone overnight. I've friends there. Now I shall feel quite at home. It's getting rather cold. Won't you come into my house and show me where the lamp is?"

Stewart rose and led the way. He found a battered kerosene lamp with a little oil in it and touched a match to the wick. His mind was in a turmoil. Beautiful girls who spent the night alone in deserted lumber camps were not in his scheme of existence. He wondered if it were not, after all, a rather absurd, but most interesting dream.

"You aren't actually going to stay here all night, are you?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered in matter-of-fact tones. "It will give me a chance to think—all by myself. I simply *can't* do it with people around."

"But, really, you know, you mustn't," he objected. "It's—it's——"

"Isn't it safe?" she demanded.

"Well—er—yes, but it's rather unconventional. Don't you think so?"

"I care *that* for convention!" She snapped two marvelously small fingers. "And besides, no one will know anything about it."

"Hadh't you better let me walk back

to the hotel with you? The trail is rather hard to find at night."

"Certainly not," she said in tones of resentment. "Don't let me keep you, though."

In a daze, the man picked up his hat.

"Thank you for a delightful supper," he mumbled, and went out the door.

Outside, the weather-beaten shacks of the camp had turned to silver-gray beneath the magic touch of the moonlight. The stars were out; a little breeze sang through the pines which crooned back to it in their sleep. It was all big and calm and peaceful.

"No problems here," the man said aloud, sniffing the fragrance of the night gratefully. "I'm out of all the problem world, thank God!"

His feet found a narrow trail which led through the woods to meet the stream farther down, and he followed it slowly for fifty yards. Then he paused and looked back. A feeble light shone from the window of the bunk house he had just left, and, as he watched, a shadow appeared at the window, a faint, slight shadow. Was it, after all, wise to leave the girl there, he asked himself? Should he not stay near in case she became frightened in the night? There was nothing to fear, of course. But then, she *might* get frightened. Girls were that way. And this one, in spite of her proudly held head, her brave eyes, might get panicky in the darkness. She was, after all, very small. The visualization of what these two words meant some way touched his heart, and he repeated them aloud: "Very small!" Instinctively his right hand fumbled in his pocket and found his pipe. He lit it and sat down on a bowlder. The shadow disappeared from the window. "Poor small girl!" said something within him. "Poor, very small, *very* small girl! And with such a big problem, too!"

His thoughts ran on. Was it possible that old Bethold, president of the

Spruce Lumber Company, was systematically robbing her, and for a purpose? No, it was too melodramatic! Such things happened only in books. But the name, Lucy Decker—Lucille de Coeur! And a librarian! It sounded like a dusty, narrow, shut-in life. With a shake of his broad shoulders the man rose to his feet. It was none of his business, after all. Who was he to mix in the artificial problems of the world of cities, of women? He turned down the trail.

The young timber cruiser had not gone a hundred yards before he froze in his tracks. A rollicking voice came to him from up the creek, a rollicking voice with a hiccup in it, the words carrying clear through the thin air:

"John Stewart's a dom high banker,  
Came to the woods a-carryin' an anchor.  
His head swole big an' his hands shrunk  
small.

Looked all day to find a crosshaul.  
Can't swing an ax, use cant hook nor pick,  
An' he's the feller I'm goin' to lick."

The voice was very near now. John Stewart started to run back the way that he had come.

"Hey, John Stewart, ye knock-kneed, double-j'inted timber cruiser! Come out an' fight," carried a voice from the camp. "I see yer light, ye soft-handed, smooth-faced coward!"

There was a mighty thump, as of a fist beating on wood.

"Mither of hivin!" rose a voice. Then silence.

Stewart burst into the open space around the camp, his eyes straining to the bunk house. The door was open, and a murmur came from within.

"'Tis wan of the wee people I t'ought I seen whin I opened th' door," an apologetic voice was saying. "'Tis a drame mayhaps—a drame. Ye'll not be afther givin' me a kiss to prove it's rale? Thin good night to ye, miss. No offense!" And the big lumberjack backed toward the door.

"Good night," came the girl's voice, not quite steady. "No offense at all! Just go, please. Good night!"

"I'm goin'," answered Red O'Brien. "Yes, I'm goin'. Ye are sure, *sure* that ye are rale?"

"Yes. Good night!"

Now, the chances are a million to one that Red O'Brien would have left with no more words, would have gone up the creek to join his fellows of the rear drive with a marvelous tale to tell, and, furthermore, have constituted himself the girl's protector. Such is the way of the lumberjack. The thing for Stewart to have done was to stay hidden. Youth is ever impatient of inaction, however. He stepped swiftly into the bunk house. O'Brien whirled as he heard him enter.

"So that's it!" chortled the lumberjack. "So *that's* it, Mither Foxy Stewart! Ye had a lady waitin' for yez."

"Get out, and get out quick!" said Stewart curtly.

"I'll go whin ye show me ye have a bether right here than me," challenged Red O'Brien.

"Mr. Stewart——" spoke the girl breathlessly. But Stewart had already struck.

There is no more deadly nor more efficient fighter in the world than the lumberjack. No rules govern his contests. They have only one object: to maim as quickly as possible by any means. Down crashed the stove, over went chairs. The girl was flung to the floor and crawled to safety. Stewart's lips were smashed to a bleeding pulp. The end came quickly, however, and it was an old trick of bayonet fighting that brought victory. Stewart's knee sank into the lumberjack's body, sending him, writhing and helpless, to the floor. The red haze of combat still on him, the cruiser bent and caught the prostrate man by the belt and collar, swung him to his shoulder, and marched out of the cabin. Fifty yards away, he

flung the lumberjack into the bushes, turned, and came back through the door.

The girl stood trembling in the middle of the wrecked room.

"Come," he said almost roughly. "You're going back to the hotel. No, don't stop for your things," he ordered, as the girl bent to pick up her small pack. "I'll see that you find them at the end of the trail in the morning."

Out into the night she followed him without a word. The stars were still placidly shining, as if nothing had happened; the rude shacks still glittered silver-gray in the moonlight. Stewart wiped the blood from his bruised lips and turned among the trees.

"I can't see," came a very small voice from behind him.

"Give me your hand," he directed curtly.

Reaction, together with disgust, came over the man. Why had he interfered? Red O'Brien would undoubtedly have gone in another moment. How primitive it had all been! Two men fighting over a woman like two male animals fighting for a mate. He wished he had never seen the girl. Well, it was hard on her, too—and she must hate him. Her hand in his was trembling and he heard her pant. Poor small thing! He slowed in his walk.

"I've—I've got to rest a minute," came a gasping voice.

"Sit down here," he said kindly, all his resentment disappearing. "I'm so sorry it had to end that way! But—but I couldn't— It wasn't—"

"Please don't talk," came the small voice, and the man sensed, rather than saw, the girl's head on her arms, and felt her sobs.

"It was silly of me to try and get away—from—from anybody," she said finally. "And you acted as I suppose you thought you should. I did so want to be alone, though, to think it all out by myself."

"Look here!" Stewart spoke brusquely. "You don't have to marry that man. You are a rich woman, if you only knew it! I cruised a Lucille de Coeur tract yesterday and to-day that is covered with valuable timber. I've cruised others of the same kind. You don't have to marry any one!"

"Wha-a-a-t!" she gasped. "What do you mean?"

"Exactly what I say," he insisted. "Your guardian has been robbing you. Go to any good lawyer and get him to demand an accounting. I'm sure of what I speak. You don't have to marry any one!"

There was a silence.

"You don't have to marry any one," he repeated.

"Why do you keep saying that?" she retorted sharply. "I thought you believed in matrimony. You championed it."

"I do," he answered, rather dazed. "Girls should be taken care of, not allowed to run around the woods alone, for instance. Especially small ones," he added in softer tones.

"Then you think that I ought to marry him?" she demanded. "You advise me to?"

"God forbid that I should advise you—on anything!" he said hastily.

She suddenly changed the subject.

"It was awful! You fought like wild beasts. It was—it was primitive! How could you? And your lips are all cut—and you had never even *seen* me before!"

"For heaven's sake, don't do that again!" he commanded irritably, as she began to cry. "Let's be getting on!" But the girl still sobbed by his side. "Please stop!" he pleaded. "Please! It hurts me."

The moon came out from behind a cloud and flooded the trail with light. She raised a tear-stained face to his.

"No one cares a pin for me," she said forlornly. "What use will the money

be? I'll only go on being a librarian. Wearing prettier clothes, perhaps, but being a librarian just the same."

"Lots of men—everybody will care for you," he comforted, an inexplicable desire to take her in his arms coming over him. "Let's be getting on," he said in tones gruffer than he meant, and held out his hand.

Silently she put hers within it and they went up the trail. The world was very still. One especially large star blinked cynically down on them.

"Thank you for fighting for me," spoke a small voice. "You fight awfully well, though—though cruelly."

"It wasn't anything," he answered abruptly, conscious that he *had* fought well; also, that his lips hurt him very much.

"I don't think men fight like that for a woman often—not these days," she said. "Do they?"

"I don't know," he said absent-mindedly. He was thinking how warm and trusting her hand felt in his.

"Did you ever do it before?"

"No."

They came to the end of the trail. The lights of the hotel blazed a few hundred yards away, lights that mocked the stars as a ballet girl might have mocked a wood nymph of the long ago.

"Good-by," she said. "I'm awfully obliged to you for fighting for me, and—and for trying to help me with my problem. There aren't any answers to people's problems, are there?"

"I don't know," he said, looking down into the eyes raised bravely to his. "I don't know." And he bent lower.

The girl did not look away. The scent of some wild flower came suddenly to him. With a sound like a groan, he gathered her in his arms. The softness of her lips hurt his bruised ones as she gave him back his kiss, but it was a pain from heaven.

"I'm your problem from now on," he said.

The girl spoke no words, but her arms went around his neck.



## THE CRIMSON ROSE

A CRIMSON-PETALED rose, a marvelous  
Blossom of June, has made me amorous.

Dumb before subtle curves, I throb to press  
My bruising lips against its loveliness.

Blinded by color, I would find a throng  
Of bright, proud words to paint it in my song.

Drunken with perfume, I stoop down to sense  
The very savor of its opulence.

Stricken by its perfection, I would break  
All other beauty for this rose's sake.

A crimson-petaled rose, a marvelous  
Blossom of June, has left me amorous.

W. ADOLPHE ROBERTS.





# His Wife

By Pauline Brooks

Author of "The Intruder," etc.

## SYNOPSIS OF FORMER CHAPTERS.

John Harding's butterfly wife, Isabelle, has decided to leave him. Her devoted admirer, Tom Carewe, has persuaded her to meet him on shipboard, en route for Europe. She plans each detail carefully, and her husband is unaware of the crisis impending. On the morning of the day set for sailing, she leaves her home, ostensibly for a shopping trip. On her way to Carewe's apartment, the taxi in which she is riding is wrecked. She is thrown out and rendered unconscious by a severe blow on the head. Her husband, on his way uptown for a luncheon engagement, happens on the scene of the accident. He is distracted when he recognizes his wife. He arranges to have her removed to their home, meanwhile mystified as to where she was going. At his home, he calls for Marie, his wife's maid, and learns that she had been dismissed by her mistress that morning. He is more puzzled than ever. After several days, Mrs. Harding regains consciousness, but retains no memory of events preceding the accident. To her husband's delight, however, she is gentler, less frivolous, more serious in her interests. She is nevertheless chagrined by her inability to associate the personalities of her friends with their names on her calling list. In preparation for a dinner party to be given by Nancy de Koven, Isabelle's close friend, John describes to her each one of their associates who is likely to be present, hoping in this way to save her embarrassment.

## CHAPTER VI.

I AM ready, John."

Framed in the doorway of the drawing-room, Isabelle stood smiling at him. John was standing by the mantel, his hands clasped behind him, his head bent, looking down into the fire. He turned quickly at the sound of her voice, and as he did so her eyes lifted involuntarily to a large canvas on the wall. He followed her glance and, after a brief scrutiny, his gaze returned to his wife.

The picture was a life-size portrait of Isabelle by Jacques-Emile Blanche, painted the winter they were in Florence. It had later been exhibited in Paris. John had always taken a joy in it deeper than that of the art lover. It had seemed to him that the artist, with the sure intuition and sublime power of portrayal of a mas-

ter, had caught and held a fleeting essence of something in Isabelle which eluded the eye of the ordinary observer; something which mirrored—so John had always felt—the soul of the woman he loved.

As he looked now from the woman to the portrait and back again, he felt suddenly that this intangible substance perceived and put on canvas by the artist, was at last visible in the flesh to his own slower perception. An indescribably fine quality in the expression of the eyes; a certain purity and strength in the soft curves of the lips; a quiet dominance of spirit and mind emanating from the whole face—which many who knew Isabelle had felt to be a deliberate intention on the part of Emile Blanche to idealize her—seemed to John, as he now gazed at her, to be a fulfillment of prophetic vision.

The portrait showed three wonderful strands of graduated pearls about her throat, reaching halfway down her bosom. John had given them to her in Paris. He suddenly became aware that to-night her throat was bare except for a small string of pearls which she had had as a girl and which she wore constantly either inside or outside her dress.

"Why aren't you wearing the pearls, dearest?" he asked eagerly.

She gave him a quick look and then she glanced up at the portrait. A slow color suffused her face. He noted the color and it vaguely disturbed him.

"Why," she faltered, "if—if you don't mind, I prefer to wear just this little strand, to-night. Do you mind, John?" she asked gently.

"No, dear child, of course not. Wear what pleases you." But the incident somehow worried him and an ill-defined sense of mystery increased.

Arriving at Mrs. de Koven's, they found themselves a little late, and Isabelle made her entrance into a crowded room. John had mercifully given her such minute descriptions of the appearance and individuality of every prospective guest—as well as tactfully suggesting to her the degree of intimacy existing between her and the different persons—and she had so patiently studied the names, in conjunction with his vivid portrayals, that she actually had no difficulty in recognizing each individual.

It was his determined purpose to protect her from any suspicion on the part of their friends of her mental condition, a condition of which he himself had only a partial knowledge. He had thought it advisable to hint to Nancy that after such an accident the memory is apt to be defective, and that if Isabelle seemed to have forgotten any trifling incidents of the past months, she should pay no attention to it. Nancy de Koven, for all her frivolous

tendencies, was a kind-hearted little woman and she had at once acquiesced in John's suggestion.

For a second, as Isabelle entered the large drawing-room, she felt as if a sea of confused faces and forms was about to surge over her. Then quickly she recovered herself and greeted every one with her usual brilliant smile and charm of manner. Those who knew her best told her how well she was looking and how glad they were to see her; but no other reference was made to the untoward circumstances of the past few weeks. Nancy had cautioned most of their friends, and Isabelle herself, with her graceful and self-possessed manner of treating the situation, made it easy for every one.

Inward perturbation and terror were, however, in her soul. She wondered how soon she would be asked some foolish little question or when a reference would be made to something unremembered by her, and whether she would be able successfully to skate over the thin ice when it should appear. For days she had studiously read the papers and magazines, the literary and dramatic reviews, and she felt that she was equipped to meet and parry any attack which dealt with topics of the day. It was the personal note she dreaded to hear struck.

Suddenly she encountered the hazel eyes of a tall, thin man standing across the room. He was staring at her, not rudely, but curiously, and Isabelle's uneasiness and apprehension throbbed violently as she realized that this man answered no description given her by John. Horror of horrors! Was he some unexpected guest? Some one she was supposed to know?

She became conscious that the unknown individual was approaching her, accompanied by her hostess. He had an air of great distinction; was slightly bald, and his blond mustache drooped over rather thin lips.

"Isabelle, my love, I don't think you have ever met Mr. Davenport. He has lived in Paris for years, but he tells me that when you and John were there, he was in Egypt. We are so glad to catch him on one of his flying and infrequent visits to New York. He only arrived a few weeks ago."

A load seemed lifted from Isabelle's spirit and she shook hands with Sydney Davenport with a smile of frank and pleased welcome. Oh, the relief of having one person, at least, whom she might talk to with no pretense!

He told Isabelle he was to have the honor of taking her in to dinner, an announcement which caused her such absurd joy that she lowered her eyes for fear he might see and misconstrue her feelings.

As they sat down, Sydney Davenport, toying with his *hors d'œuvre*, took a leisurely survey of the large circular table with its center piece of crystal and silver, laden with roses, its cut glass and exquisite china, and the characteristic and interminable rows of forks and spoons. Then his eyes roved over the men and women who formed the outer circle of all this opulent display. He turned, smiling, to Isabelle.

"Americans carry their rubber stamp with them wherever they go, do they not? Rome, Paris, London, New York—they're very much the same everywhere."

"What is there so indistinguishing—or I suppose you mean singular—about Americans?" she asked pleasantly. This certainly was safe ground.

"Well," he lazily pursued, "hasn't it occurred to you, Mrs. Harding, with your cosmopolitan experience, that Americans are a bit more given to exhibiting their wares for the edification and envy of their friends, than the English or French or Italians, let us say?"

"Yes," she agreed, "things are more simplified over there, especially on the

continent—except in the American colonies."

"All this display of cutlery for example," he continued, lightly indicating the expanse of gleaming silver. "When I sit down at the table of an American hostess I always have to begin with a breathless calculation as to the lady's temperamental peculiarities. You can nearly always be sure," he added with a quizzical smile, "that if she has a large, open nature you're expected to begin with the fork farthest away from your plate; if she's a trifle small-minded you will find your *hors d'œuvre* fork tucked half under your plate."

Isabelle gave a frank laugh.

"That's certainly a new way of forming estimates of your friend's characteristics," she commented.

"Oh, no," he replied, "I've been doing it for years. I scarcely ever slip up on it. You observe," he added, "Nancy de Koven is as open as the day, and behold, the question of precedence in the matter of forks is at once determined!"

"Is the question of table service the only one in which you find Americans unique?" she asked.

"Oh, dear, no! Look at the women. All pretty, but nearly all either a trifle too thin or too fat. English women strike a better average, and practically all French women have perfect figures."

"I suppose you'll admit that we dress better than English women," Isabelle smilingly pursued the subject.

"Yes, our women dress about as well as the French, but, with a few charming exceptions"—he glanced appreciatively at her inconspicuous string of pearls and took mental note of the modest cut of her bodice—"they wear as many jewels over as recklessly bared shoulders as our English cousins."

"How about the men?" she queried curiously. "Are American men the same wherever you find them?"

"They certainly are—most of them"

—Mr. Davenport gave a wry smile—  
“unless they’ve lived abroad for years. They’re usually famous for a remarkable stock of funny stories, and they look bored and unhappy if they can’t ‘return to their mutton,’ so to speak, in conversation.”

Isabelle laughed again.

“You must be very unpopular with our countrymen, Mr. Davenport. You know, few of them have any patience with a man who seems to admire or approve of anything European.”

“But admit, my dear lady, that American women who live abroad prefer the society of European men. And it’s simply because conversation is an art in the old world. A woman is fully appreciated if she is really clever and amusing, and yet she doesn’t have to do all the entertaining.”

“At least,” Isabelle parried with a smile, “you must admit the moth-eaten adage that ‘American men make the best husbands.’”

He laughed.

“That’s not national, it’s individual. It takes genius to make a good husband. Almost any man can qualify as a good lover.” He smiled inscrutably into her eyes and she felt vaguely uncomfortable and wondered why. He went on somewhat irrelevantly: “Will you pardon a descent to personalities and permit me to tell you that the instant you entered Mrs. de Koven’s drawing-room I knew who you were by your dress? I saw your portrait when it was exhibited in Paris.”

She glanced up and again caught a look in his eyes which made her feel ill at ease. He went smoothly on:

“I did not have the pleasure of meeting you two years ago when you were in Paris, but I recognized your face, from the portrait, the first time I saw you, although it was only as you passed me in a carriage.”

The remark puzzled her and, unthinking, she answered:

“You have seen me before to-night?”

“Yes,” he said quietly, and added: “About four weeks ago—on Fifty-seventh Street. I was on my way, on foot, to take up my abode in Tom Carewe’s apartment. I’ve taken it over for six months, you know.”

She succeeded in looking politely interested, but made no comment, and he added with gay friendliness:

“We’re all so mystified as to his whereabouts! Do tell us, Mrs. Harding, where he’s disappeared to.” He gave her a quick, sharp look, and there was a gleam of amused curiosity in his shrewd eyes.

She wondered if he noticed her start of surprise. Tormenting queries flashed through her mind. Who was this Tom Carewe whose whereabouts this stranger assumed that she must know? What should she reply? And why did he look at her so queerly when he spoke of seeing her on Fifty-seventh Street? What was the connection between this incident and the apartment of this man “Tom?” Surely the man was mistaken, anyway, and had not seen her before to-night. She had great difficulty in recovering herself, and the effort caused the slow color to mount to her temples.

He noticed the telltale color, and in his hazel eyes the look of amused cynicism deepened. But his world had trained him well, and in a tone of indifference he began an offhand comment on the up-to-date luxury of ocean travel. His remark was interrupted by the high-pitched voice of a woman at the other end of the table.

“Isabelle, you’ve simply got to decide a delicate point for us! You’re the only one who can. Harry says that Tom Carewe went off on his yacht nearly three weeks ago, down to the Bahamas, and Gerald insists that he left with a party of men for Florida, tarpon fishing. Where *did* he go, any-

way, and why did he disappear so suddenly and mysteriously?"

Every eye turned toward Isabelle and every ear was ready to catch her reply. For a second she half closed her eyes and her face went slowly white. She had narrowly escaped from an uncomfortable corner but a few seconds before and now the dreaded moment had at last burst upon her and she could not meet it. Who, in Heaven's name, was Tom Carewe, and why should she know more about him and his whereabouts than any one else present?

All her firm determination to remain mistress of an extraordinary situation and to avoid embarrassment, if not actual humiliation, for herself, and distress and disappointment for John, had availed nothing. She felt faint and dizzy, but by a supreme effort of will her eyelids lifted and her eyes, dark now with actual terror, sought her husband's. It was a proud, yet piteous appeal for help from her soul to his. Every fiber of chivalry and tenderness in his big nature responded to the call, although he misunderstood the need from which it sprang. The smile in his eyes was his answer to her; the brighter smile on his lips was his shield and buckler for her against the world, as he turned to the woman whose sudden question had seemed to turn Isabelle to stone.

"The fact is, Isabelle has not seen Tom since he brought her home the night of the Griswold's theatricals—the night before her accident. The doctor, as you know, has not permitted her to see any one and Tom's sudden departure was as much of a surprise to us as to the rest of you."

Nancy's quick generosity leaped halfway to meet John's chivalry. She did not at all understand, but she said:

"If I'd been through what you have, Belle, I shouldn't have known or cared if all my best friends went to Hades or Halifax and never came back!"

In an instant the buzz of conversation again spread around the table and the incident was apparently forgotten. Into Isabelle's cheeks the normal color slowly mounted. Sydney Davenport turned a strange penetrating regard upon her.

"You have had an accident?" he questioned gently.

"Yes." She hesitated. "I was thrown from a taxicab and badly hurt."

The little frown between his eyes deepened.

"When was this accident?"

"On February twenty-fourth, just four weeks ago," she answered, wondering why he looked at her so intently.

"A-ah," he drawled. "How very odd! The very day I saw you in a taxi in Fifty-seventh Street! It must have happened shortly after that." He spoke meditatively. Then he added with a sudden daring glance at her: "I wonder if Tom—" He broke off abruptly because of an innocent wonder in the clear wide gaze she gave him. He bit his mustache in a nervous embarrassment he had not experienced for years. Then, with a light smile he swung into the gossip of Paris salons and studios, and she laughed at his recountal of the linguistic vagaries of a well-known American "Malaprop."

All but two of those who witnessed Isabelle's disturbance of mind at the mention of Carewe, jumped to the conclusion that some trouble had occurred between them, or between her and John because of Tom, and that that was the real cause of his abrupt departure, and that this leaving town on the day of the accident was a mere coincidence.

—Mr. Davenport's interpretation of Isabelle's peculiar behavior was at variance with that of the others, but, whatever it was, it did not disclose itself then nor later when he was questioned about it. No one could have imagined the source of the interested



speculation which brightened his eyes as he furtively watched her.

John, for all that the experience of the past three weeks should have fully prepared him, was as far as any one from divining the actual cause of his wife's perturbation. The idea that she might have completely forgotten her friendship for Tom Carewe—as he knew she had forgotten other things—never remotely occurred to him as a possibility. What he did imagine was that the gradual change in her and in her attitude toward him, since her accident, had made her sensitive to any allusion to a subject which she knew had been a painful one to her husband.

If at times he had wondered why Carewe's name had not passed her lips since the moment when she had made him wince by saying that Tom never bored her, he had always resolutely refused to permit his mind to dwell on the matter, as he had likewise refrained from letting the perplexing and disturbing occurrences of the day of the accident absorb his thoughts. Whether or not Tom had called at the house after the accident he did not even know. So many had called or telephoned, and he had been too worried and occupied even to inquire their names or look over the cards. He had heard of Tom's departure from New York, but had attached no special significance to the occurrence. Tom Carewe was known to be a creature of impulses, and, as he had plenty of money with which to gratify them, it was no unusual thing for him suddenly to betake himself away on his yacht or by some other means of escape, giving scant, if any, warning to his friends.

On the drive home no reference was made to the embarrassing contretemps at dinner, but Isabelle's intuition told her that, although John had come instantly to her rescue, he had failed, for some strange and obscure reason, to understand what lay back of her con-

fusion. She was puzzled and in a measure disturbed when the wonder grew in her mind as to what he could have supposed was the real trouble. And the wonder increased as she contemplated the question flung at her about Tom Carewe and the looks which had been quickly and lightly exchanged between the guests—looks which Isabelle had barely noticed at the moment, so suddenly had she lost her self-possession—but which now recurred to her.

At her bedroom door John took her tenderly in his strong arms and kissed her eyes and lips.

"Good night, dearest little girl," he said. "You were very fine and brave this evening, and next time the ordeal will not be so hard."

When Rose left the room a sudden memory came to Isabelle. She walked to the white-paneled room which opened from her bedchamber. It was lined with huge drawers and cupboards for dresses, and at one end there was a small safe in the wall. She stood in contemplation of this for a moment; then she began to try the combination. It was no use; she would be compelled to tell John sooner or later that she had forgotten the combination and the sooner she told him the better. She would have to confess to him that when she chose the black velvet dress for the dinner, she had longed to wear the pearls which were conspicuous in her portrait, but that she had tried vainly then as on several other occasions to open her safe.

As she turned restlessly on her pillow, the last conscious thought which echoed in her tired brain was a confused reiteration of three perplexing questions: What was the combination of her safe? *Who* was Tom Carewe? And what part had he played in her past life?

Tormented and worn out with the worry of it all, she finally fell asleep.



## CHAPTER VII.

When Isabelle awoke the following morning she was aware of a feeling of profound depression. She speculated idly for a moment as to the cause of it. As she lay raised on her pillows, watching the fugitive sunbeams which stole under the drawn curtain and danced on the polished floor, her thoughts gradually became less confused; the questions which had so harassed her the night before returned with renewed insistence. The one which perplexed her most seemed to overshadow the others with an importance which was disproportionate—what was the combination of her safe?

She knew that she would some time be called upon to wear the jewels, and further dissimulation she felt to be as unwise as it was distasteful. Her determination to tell John that very morning grew more resolute.

Her face was paler than usual when she joined him at breakfast. As they rose from the table she nerved herself and remarked:

"John, there's something I should like to tell you this morning if you have time."

"If I have time?" he repeated, smiling. "Well, we'll just take the time."

He slipped his arm through hers and together they went up to the library, chatting lightly on indifferent topics. He lighted his cigar and, still standing in front of the fireplace, looked inquiringly at her. She had fallen suddenly silent and sat watching him with serious eyes, from the depths of the big armchair.

"Well, what is it, dear?" he asked cheerfully. "More social tangles?"

Her glance fell and the troubled expression he had learned to dread shadowed her face. She nervously clasped and unclasped her hands. Then she said:

"John, I have a confession to make."

"Yes?" he said quietly. "I'm sure it can't be such a very serious matter."

She gave him a quick glance from her wide blue eyes and then plunged into the vexing question.

"You asked me last night about my—my pearls, and I'm afraid I deceived you. I wanted to spare you the worry I knew it would cause you, but I realize that I should have been perfectly frank with you. John, the reason I did not wear the pearls was because I have forgotten the combination of my safe."

He understood what this admission of forgetfulness must have cost her and it aroused his deepest sympathy, but he allowed no hint of the distress it caused him, to show in his face or manner.

"So that's the trouble, is it? Do you think you are the only one in this great city who forgets safe combinations?" His tone was bantering. "So many people forget them that the large safe concerns employ experts to supply lost combinations. I've forgotten this one myself, and if I can't find a record of it in the house I'll send for an expert."

He could not find the record and arranged by telephone for an expert to come at one o'clock. Isabelle greeted his announcement that he would be home for luncheon with a smile which quickened his own sense of joy.

Whether the fact that his wife was more lovable and companionable even than in the first months of their marriage, was entirely the miraculous result of her accident, or partly the outcome of her own effort, did not neutralize his present happiness on which the only shadow was her increasingly evident weakness of memory. But to his anxious questioning Doctor Bowyer had invariably replied: "Give her a little time, John. Be patient and all will come right."

Shortly after luncheon the butler announced Mr. Burns, the expert.

John, followed by Isabelle, led the way to the little room containing the safe. Burns sat down in front of the small steel affair and was soon hard at work revolving the dial, listening attentively to the click of the tumblers as they fell, and now and again jotting down certain numbers on a pad.

Isabelle watched him, fascinated.

"Really, I don't see how you do it," she ventured at last. "I tried ever so many times just that way and never succeeded in accomplishing anything."

Burns smiled.

"That ain't surprising, Mrs. Harding. It takes long practice and a very sharp ear to work out a combination."

In what seemed to her an incredibly short time, Burns copied a set of figures on a clean sheet of paper and turned to John.

"I guess we've got it, Mr. Harding."

After a few preliminary turns of the dial, he revolved it first to one side and then to the other, stopping at certain numbers. He finally seized the handle and turned it sharply to the right; the bars shot back and the door opened.

For a second John stood gazing through the opening with astonished eyes. On the small upper shelf lay a Russian-leather case; otherwise the safe was empty. With an exclamation he seized the case and opened it. On white velvet lay the pearls which he had asked his wife to wear the night before. She started forward with a cry of pleasure.

"Oh, John, how beautiful!" Then, as he did not speak, her glance lifted from the case he held in his hands to his face. Her color faded and a look of dismay crept into her eyes.

"But, Isabelle!" he exclaimed. "Your diamond necklace—your tiara—your bracelets—where are they?"

Instantly he regretted his words. Her expression of delight at her first

glimpse of the pearls had changed to one of consternation, verging on fright.

"Oh, John, what does it mean? Have they been stolen?"

He stepped quickly toward her and threw his arm around her.

"Don't worry, little girl. They may be tucked away in some corner. At any rate, you mustn't distress yourself about them. We're sure to recover them even if they have been stolen."

"But, John," she persisted, her voice trembling, "it's all my fault. If I could only remember! What *could* I have done with them?" Then she broke down and buried her face on his shoulder.

Burns meanwhile had risen and was visibly embarrassed.

"Hope you haven't lost anything, Mr. Harding," he said.

"Well, I don't know," John replied. "There were some other articles of value in the safe, but they have probably been misplaced."

"The safe hasn't been tampered with as far as I can see, Mr. Harding. It's in good condition. Here is the combination." And he handed John the slip of paper.

John thanked him and led Isabelle to the couch.

"Just rest here," he said in a low tone. "Don't worry. It will only make you ill and make me very unhappy. I'll go downstairs with Mr. Burns and come right back."

It was a sad, tear-stained face which met his anxious gaze on his return, and the sight of it made him wish he had never laid eyes on the jewels. He kissed her and stroked her hair with clumsy, gentle fingers.

"Cheer up, little girl," he said.

She tried to smile.

"John, I'm unspeakably sorry. I suppose you'll lose patience with me entirely and I shan't blame you if you do."

"Dear child"—all John's love and concern for her well-being rang in his voice—"of course I don't blame you! Why should I? But I beseech you not to worry about the jewels; they're sure to turn up somewhere."

"But they're not in my rooms," she broke in. "I've been through everything in the past week and they're absolutely not here."

"Well, don't let's worry," he repeated in a feeble, masculine endeavor to treat the matter lightly.

"How can I help worrying?" she exclaimed. "Have you sent for a detective?"

"No, I haven't, but I will at once if it will make you feel any better."

"Oh, yes, of course it will. Come!" she cried eagerly, jumping up from the couch. "Please telephone right away, John."

John was worried. The very thing which Doctor Bowyer had warned him against had occurred. If he had not mentioned the subject of the pearls the previous night, this startling discovery might at least have been postponed until she should be better able to cope with the situation.

Joseph Elkins, of the Pinkerton Detective Agency, made his appearance promptly at two o'clock.

Elkins was not a typical Sherlock Holmes in appearance. He was a bit above the average height, with broad, square shoulders, and he gave the impression of a muscular ability to meet the exigencies of his profession. There was nothing sharp or keen about his rather round, cheerful countenance. His mouth was large and had a good-natured twist at the corners; his eyes were gray-green, but as they were habitually half covered by rather heavy lids, their expression did little to contradict the suggestion of placid well-being conveyed by his other features. If at times a light of almost uncanny intelligence shone behind the drooping

lids, few ever detected it. Take him all in all, Mr. Elkins had the appearance of a successful man about town, and his quiet manners were those of a gentleman.

John met him in the library and the two sat down.

"Now, Mr. Harding," said Elkins, "just give me an outline of the case."

"The facts are these," John began. "Mrs. Harding had her jewels locked in a safe in one of her rooms. I will take you up there presently so that you may inspect the safe. As far as I know, they were all there on the twenty-third of February, for that evening Mrs. Harding had been out and I distinctly remember that she wore her tiara. The following morning she met with an accident. A taxicab in which she was riding was wrecked in a collision and she was rendered unconscious by a severe blow on the head. She has since recovered in a measure, but the blow resulted in a partial loss of memory, and many of the events of her former life she has entirely forgotten. Among other trifles, she forgot the combination of her safe. Today I got one of the Marvin people up here and had it opened, and it was then I discovered that the safe was empty except for one case which contained three strands of valuable pearls. Other articles of value belonging to my wife, which should also have been in the safe, are not to be found."

"Well, that's certainly very queer," said Elkins.

"It's beyond me," John continued. "As it happens, I would rather have had the pearls taken, for they were my own gift to my wife. The other jewels—a diamond necklace, a diamond-and-pearl tiara, several beautiful bracelets, some old-fashioned brooches, and a number of very beautiful rings, were heirlooms, inherited by Mrs. Harding upon the death of her mother."

"Was Mrs. Harding wearing any of

the missing jewels when the accident occurred?" Elkins inquired.

"No, I think not. I was on the scene almost immediately, and I am certain that she wore none of them."

"Then you were not with her when she was injured?"

"No, she was alone, although her personal maid left the house with her. I was on my way uptown from my office and happened to reach Thirty-fourth Street just as the accident occurred."

After a short interval of silence, the detective asked:

"Where was Mrs. Harding going at the time?"

John moved uneasily.

"That I can't tell you, for I do not know myself. She was evidently dressed for a journey, but I know nothing more about her plans for that day."

"Where is this maid you refer to?" Elkins asked.

"I don't know," John answered. "Although the other servants did not see Marie go, they all seem to think that she left the house with Mrs. Harding on the morning of the accident, and we have not seen her since."

"Have you questioned your wife about her movements on that day?"

The blood mounted slowly to John's face.

"No, I have not." His tone was low and repressed. "Our family physician, Doctor Bowyer, has forbidden me to refer to the past in any way, for fear that it might prejudice my wife's condition. I presume that she was suddenly called out of town and she probably left word with Marie, who neglected to deliver the message. At any rate, it would do no good to question her, for she would already have volunteered information on the subject if she had any recollection of it."

Elkins was silent. His experience had extended over many years, and the ways of the "idle rich" were not unknown to him. He forbore to question

John further on the subject of his wife's destination. He made a few notes in his book and then he remarked:

"You have perfect confidence in your servants—I mean those who are at present in your employ?"

"Absolute," John said briefly.

"Did your confidence extend to the maid, Marie?"

John hesitated.

"No," he finally replied, "I can't say that it did. I don't wish to be unjust, and I must say that Mrs. Harding was perfectly satisfied with the girl. I know nothing derogatory to her character. I simply disliked her instinctively the first time I saw her, and I was unable to conquer my prejudice."

"Are her personal effects still here?"

"No, they are not." John's manner had grown nervous. "It appears that she had made all her preparations to leave some days before. An expressman called for her trunk the day before she left. I knew nothing about it and Mrs. Harding did not mention the matter. I'm not even sure that she left the house with my wife, for none of the servants could tell me anything definite about it."

"Do you happen to know what transfer company came for her trunk?"

"I thought of that," said John eagerly, "and I asked the servants about it, but either they did not know or else they could not remember."

"Just give me a short description of this girl, Marie, Mr. Harding."

"I think I can give you a fairly accurate description of her. She is twenty-two years old, about five feet, four inches tall, and weighs, I should say, about one hundred and twenty-five pounds. She has very fine black hair and large, very dark eyes. She has a good complexion, with bright color, and her features are small and rather pretty. She speaks fairly good English, with a marked French accent."

## CHAPTER VIII.

"Good!" Elkins commented. Then he continued: "Where did you get her? What agency, I mean?"

"She came from Mrs. Brown's employment agency on Madison Avenue."

"Then," Elkins averred, "we shall have no difficulty in tracing her if she is honest. If she has had anything to do with the disappearance of the jewels it will be a more difficult matter." He made several notations in his memorandum book before speaking again. Then he said: "Of course, Mr. Harding, you have looked for your wife's jewel case?"

"Jewel case," John repeated blankly.

"Why, yes," Elkins looked up quickly. "Your wife had such a case, had she not?"

"Certainly. It was a fairly large, square box of Russian leather and had her initials on the cover."

"Have you searched for it?"

"No, I have not. I hadn't thought of it." Then, after a moment's consideration, he added: "I'm sure it is not in my wife's apartments, however, for she has looked everywhere for the jewels, and if she had found the case, she would, of course, have told me."

Elkins did not reply. Instead, he sat gazing into the fire abstractedly until John spoke again.

"What do you make of it, Mr. Elkins?"

The detective slowly closed his notebook and returned it to his pocket.

"Our first step must be to trace Marie Bédon. She may be entirely innocent and ignorant of the whole matter, but, if I am not mistaken, and if we find her, we shall be able to get some valuable information from her. Now, if you are willing, I should like to take a look at the safe."

A little later Elkins left the house.

"Well, Mademoiselle Bédon," he commented to himself, "I guess we'll begin with you."

Joseph Elkins was a man of few words and prompt action. The case of the Harding jewels suggested to him no very unique or mysterious possibilities and he felt an easy confidence in his ability ultimately to trace and restore them. That the pearl necklace should have been left behind seemed at first rather peculiar, but his careful examination of the safe had convinced him that it had not been tampered with. That Mrs. Harding had worn at least one of the missing articles on the night preceding her accident was certain. The supposition that she must have placed the tiara in the safe before retiring seemed a reasonable one. No thief would be likely to leave an article as valuable as the pearl necklace. He reasoned that if the jewels had been removed from the safe, there was small possibility that any one but Mrs. Harding herself could have taken them.

The perplexing feature of the case was the unexplained action of that lady on the day of the accident. He had with great difficulty restrained his curiosity during his conversation with John, and had more than once wondered if she really had forgotten all that had transpired before her injury or if she had some carefully concealed reason which made it convenient to pretend that she could remember nothing.

Elkins' review of the case was as follows: Mrs. Harding, young, beautiful, rich, had left her home suddenly, dressed for a journey and accompanied by her maid. On her way to the railroad station, the unexpected had happened; her taxi had been wrecked and she had been rendered unconscious. What had become of Marie? What more natural than that she should have preceded her mistress to the station in order to purchase the tickets while Mrs. Harding had visited some shop or modiste? Simplicity itself. But what



had been her object in leaving home without so much as notifying her husband?

There were floating suspicions and conjectures in Elkins' mind which may have been induced by past experience with the fashionable world. Had the case involved Mr. Harding, instead of his wife, his thoughts might have been crystallized into the one phrase: "*Cherchez la femme.*" As it was—well, he felt that in order to follow the case intelligently, it would be necessary first to run through a list of Mrs. Harding's male acquaintances. He did not lay too much stress on this phase of the situation, but he felt instinctively that it was one which he could not afford to neglect.

With a start, he found himself at Fifty-ninth Street. A few minutes' walk brought him in front of a door bearing the modest inscription: "Brown Employment Agency." He rang the bell and a trim-looking maid ushered him into the office. The appointments and general appearance of the room gave proof that this was an agency for the rich and fashionable alone.

A refined-looking woman who was writing at a table desk in one corner looked up as he entered.

"Mrs. Brown?" he queried.

"Yes, I am Mrs. Brown," she replied. "Will you be seated?" she added, indicating a chair.

"My name is Elkins," he explained as he sat down, "and I called to see if you can give me the address of Marie Bédon, formerly in the employ of Mr. John Harding."

"Just a moment, please." Mrs. Brown ran rapidly through a card index. She found the desired card and glanced over it. "I'm sorry I can give you no information as to the whereabouts of Marie Bédon," Mrs. Brown resumed. "She went to Mrs. Harding and I have no other record on her card."

"She has no home address?" Elkins inquired.

"No, her home is in France. She came to me when she landed in this country five years ago, and she has been steadily employed ever since."

"Can you give me any information with regard to her character and qualifications?"

"Certainly. Marie has always worked as a lady's maid. She is very efficient and absolutely reliable as far as I know."

"Where was she employed before she went to Mrs. Harding?"

Mrs. Brown again referred to the card.

"She was with the Cookes on Madison Avenue for four years. I remember now that they closed their home and went abroad. They gave her an excellent recommendation."

It seemed useless to pursue the matter further, so he thanked the lady and departed.

He walked the entire length of a block in deep thought. His interview had shown that Marie's character up to the time she had entered the Hardings' household, was irreproachable. But, when she left their employ, why had she not gone direct to Mrs. Brown's agency? Suppose she had decamped with the jewel box! Her first instinct would have been to avoid those with whom she had been previously acquainted. Certainly she would have no need for employment agencies as long as her money lasted. Nevertheless, it would be as well to make sure of this point.

Elkins entered a drug store and from a telephone book made a list of the principle employment agencies in the city. Then he called them up one by one, but Marie Bédon was unknown to any of them. It was evident that wherever she might be, she was independent of employment bureaus. He called up another number.



"Hello! Is that Pinkerton's? This is Elkins. Say, is Bob Blake there? Hello, is that you, Bob? Say, Bob, meet me up at my rooms right away, will you? I'm on my way there now. All right. Good-by."

He hurried across town and found Blake awaiting him.

"Got a job for you, Bob," he said, as he closed the door of his living room.

Blake eyed him without interest.

"Same old game, I suppose—something you don't want to touch yourself."

"No"—Elkins smiled good-humoredly as he seated himself and lighted a cigar—"something which is rather too delicate for my clumsy hands."

Blake sniffed disdainfully as he stretched himself in the morris chair. He was a tall young fellow of powerful build, and his appearance and easy manners showed good breeding. His clear blue eyes looked from a face unusually boyish even for his years, which were not many. He was commonly referred to as "the kid" at the agency.

"Well, what is it?" he asked indifferently.

"Come, Bobby, cheer up. I want you to enter the social whirl. Get together all the literature you can on the subject and find out where Mrs. Harding, wife of John Harding, architect, Fifth Avenue and Sixty-seventh Street, spends her time and her husband's money. Get me a list of her most intimate friends like a good boy, and I'll take you on the case."

Blake groaned.

"Same old thing. I knew it."

"Looks like a good case, kid. Don't you worry. I'll make it worth your while. Only go and dig up that information, because I need it."

"All right, Joe, but this is kindergarten work and no mistake. I know already who some of the Hardings' acquaintances are. Well, here goes to find out what you want to know." And Blake emphasized his remark by jump-

ing to his feet and seizing his hat and coat.

An hour later he returned to Elkins' room.

"Here you are, Joe." He tossed a piece of paper on the table. "That's not a complete visiting list, but it may help. That man, Thomas Carewe, by the way, disappeared from New York about four weeks ago. And the special dope on that subject is that he's been hanging around Mrs. Harding for several months and there's been a good deal of gossip."

"Humph!" grunted Elkins. "And this De Koven woman is Mrs. Harding's most intimate friend? Guess I'll run in and see the lady. I'll make up some excuse. Well," he added, "I'm going to ask you to help me out with this case."

"More visiting lists?" Blake asked dryly.

"No, kid. Going to give you regular work on the case. Sit down and I'll tell you what I know about it."

When Blake had again comfortably settled himself in his chair, Elkins related to him all he had learned from John Harding and of his fruitless inquiry at the employment bureau.

"Now you see, Bob," he resumed, "the first thing seems to be to find this French maid."

"What's her name?" Blake asked.

"Marie Bédon!"

"What does she look like?"

Elkins described her.

"All right, I've got her." Blake's tone was casual.

"You've got her!"

"Well, I know who she is. Met her at the French ball. I went with Dan Sawyer the night he was given that assignment for his paper. This girl, Marie Bédon, was such a peach that we both made a point of finding out about her and meeting her. She's now maid to Mrs. Albert Summers on East Eighty-ninth Street."

Elkins stared at him.

"To think of my spending even a half hour this afternoon trying to trace her, and you never said a word!"

"Well, how could I? You didn't ask me."

This argument seemed unanswerable and Elkins laughed good-naturedly.

"All right," he said cheerfully, "we'll have an early dinner and then go up there. The family will be dining and it may save the girl some annoyance—in case she's innocent, you know."

"That's certainly decent of you, Joe."

"Well, she may be. It's an odd combination of circumstances. Sum it up. This maid suddenly leaves her mistress, unknown to the husband, the very day his wife has an accident, the maid having sent away her clothes the previous day. Then the husband discovers the loss of certain jewels and assures the detective he employs that his wife remembers nothing which preceded her accident. And now you contribute the small, but perhaps significant, fact that a man whose name gossip links with that of the wife in question, left town over four weeks ago—the day of the accident or thereabouts. Now who the devil has those jewels? What do you make of it, Bob?"

"We-ell—" The boy hesitated. "Of course, Marie *might* have taken them, but if so, why didn't she leave town? And I can't see why you think Carewe's disappearance is significant. Surely you don't think *he*—why, what's the connection, anyway?"

"My boy," said Elkins with a slow smile, "there are things you haven't even cut your eyeteeth on. At any rate, if we can prove that the girl, Marie, had nothing to do with those jewels, it *might* be worth while to trace the movements of this man Carewe."

"But he wouldn't *steal* them from her! He's got dough to burn."

"Of course he wouldn't *steal* them," explained Elkins patiently, "but sometimes women give valuables to men they're stuck on—just for safe-keeping, maybe. Do you get my meaning?"

"I'm on," said Blake.

At half past seven they rang the bell of an imposing gray-stone house on Eighty-ninth Street.

"Is there a girl here named Marie Bédon?" inquired Elkins of the man who opened the door.

"Yes, sir." He gave Elkins a startled look.

"Elkins is my name. I'm from the Pinkerton detective agency." He threw back the lapel of his coat and displayed his badge to the man's wide-open eyes. "Will you ask her to come here for a moment? We want her to give us a little information."

They were shown into a small reception room near the front door. The house was silent. Presumably the family were dining out. The man hurried down the broad hall and presently reappeared with Marie.

"Are you Marie Bédon?" inquired Elkins with an involuntary glance of admiration at the pretty face of the French girl.

She swept both men with a look which was full of disdain and ignored Blake's rather embarrassed nod of recognition.

"*Mais, oui,*" she replied.

"Well, Miss Marie, there's a little information we're after concerning a jewel case belonging to Mrs. John Harding."

"I know nothing of the jewels of madame." Her head lifted haughtily as she regarded the two men through half-closed eyes.

"Well, perhaps not," Elkins remarked indifferently, "but you'd better come with us so you can tell Mrs. Harding all about it."

"Tell Madame Harding!" she

gasped. She leaned forward. Her eyes seemed to grow larger and darker and the color fled from her cheeks. "Madame is not in New York, *n'est-ce pas?*"

"Mrs. Harding is at her home," Elkins replied grimly.

"Madame did not go?" Her voice trembled.

"Go where?" Elkins questioned sharply.

"Oh, nothing. I will go with you—at once I will go. My lady is out—I cannot ask her permission—but I will go."

Elkins asked if he might use the telephone. He rang up John Harding and told him that he would like to call on him within an hour, in regard to the missing jewels; that he had found Marie Bédon and wished to bring her with him. Harding told him to come by all means. Elkins then remarked that he would like, if possible, to have Mrs. Harding present at the interview. Harding replied that if he permitted Elkins to see Mrs. Harding he hoped it would not be necessary to discuss anything with her which might cause her annoyance. Elkins assured him that he would detain his wife only a few moments, and then he rang off.

Returning to Marie, he asked her to be ready to go with him in a half hour, and she begged him to call for her at the servants' entrance.

On the way to the Harding home Marie maintained a discreet silence. Her face was pale and her pretty red lips were firmly pressed together. She obstinately refused to answer any of Elkins' questions. Finally he whistled softly and gave it up.

#### CHAPTER IX.

At dinner that evening, after Elkins had announced to John his wish to bring Marie to the house, John was absent-minded. He talked intermit-

tently, but Isabelle realized that he was preoccupied with the thought of the detective's prospective call.

From the first hour when the loss of the jewels had been discovered John had been conscious of a distinct suspicion of the maid, Marie. His strong sense of justice, however, had made him refrain from expressing these suspicions in conversation with the detective, for he realized that no logical foundation existed for them. He was confident that Isabelle had never told her maid the combination of the safe, and he remembered her saying once that she never opened it in the presence of Marie, as much out of a sense of fairness toward the girl as in protection of her own interests.

It was curious, he pondered, that Isabelle—the old Isabelle, as he unconsciously phrased it to himself—though reckless in most matters and apparently careless of the value of money or its equivalents, had never indulged in a habit, common to most women of her world, of leaving money and jewelry where they would be a source of responsibility, if not of actual temptation, to her own servants or to those in the homes of her friends. She had always been singularly thoughtful and considerate of the servant class, especially in her own household. It was one of the traits in her which, from his first knowledge of her, had impelled John's admiration. It had, indeed, acted often as a species of antidote to some less agreeable impression conveyed by her to his sensitive consciousness.

Thinking of these things brought him back to his speculations regarding Marie. He had often wondered during the preceding weeks why she had left Isabelle, to whom, he felt sure, she was genuinely attached. Consistent in his plan not to question his wife or to broach subjects of a personal nature, he had frequently controlled the impulse to ask her about her former maid.

Once or twice the wonder had crossed his mind as to the possibility of Isabelle's having entirely forgotten Marie simply because she had in no way been reminded of her since her return to consciousness. He had not even intimated his suspicions regarding Marie.

Moreover, he failed to imagine how the maid could have had access to the jewels, but, unless his wife had herself taken them with her on that fateful morning almost five weeks ago, he could connect no one but the French girl with their disappearance. As to why Isabelle had taken them from the house—if she had done so—he was weary of asking himself. He could only conjecture that she might have taken them to some designer, of whom he had never heard, and obviously forgotten about it. He was clear only on one point—that if the jewels had been in her possession when she left the house, Marie would be exonerated.

For her part, Isabelle was preoccupied with a nervous shrinking from an encounter with this French maid of whom she had no recollection.

Shortly after nine o'clock Elkins arrived with Bob Blake and Marie Bédon. They were shown into the library where John and his wife were waiting. John rose at their entrance. Elkins introduced his young friend, Blake; then John turned to Marie.

"Good evening, Marie," he said kindly.

Marie, after a sharp glance at his face and a slight inclination of her pretty head, turned her eyes in Isabelle's direction. The two detectives bowed gravely as John introduced them to his wife.

Isabelle looked at the girl and murmured a vague greeting. She was trying hard to appear unconcerned and as if she remembered her former maid. Marie approached and curtsied.

"Bon jour, madame. I hope madame is feeling well."

From under half-closed lids the girl watched her narrowly. Yes, she was beautiful, her Madame Harding—the most beautiful woman she had ever known! More beautiful even than before! Her expression was sweeter—and what had she done to her hair? Ah, yes, it was parted. How strange! But it became madame so! She had loved her dear mistress and had obeyed her in blind devotion, and things—strange things—had happened. And now this horrid man, Mr. Elkins, and his friend, who was not quite so horrid, had brought her back to this house to question her about—Mon Dieu! About what *would* they question her?

As these thoughts drove tempestuously through the girl's brain, Isabelle, with a grave gesture of courtesy and a smile which included the three men, said:

"Please be seated, Mr. Elkins and Mr. Blake. Marie, *asseyez-vous.*" When she addressed the maid, she pointed to a comfortable chair near her own.

Marie curtsied again.

"*Merci, madame; madame est très bonne.*"

As she seated herself, she glanced first at Blake and then at Elkins, and instinctively her shoulders straightened themselves and her head lifted. Her eyes were very bright and her lips pressed closer together as she told herself that, no matter what they asked her, these horrid men, she would reply only what, by watching madame, she might consider *best* to reply. Nothing more—absolutely nothing more. They could not force her. Certainly not! What *could* they do to her, she wondered.

Blake, as he glanced at her, felt a slight uneasiness, but Elkins was only amused at her expression and manner, which said to him as plainly as words: "Do what you will, monsieur; *le detec-*

tive, but you will get nothing out of me."

"Mr. Harding," Elkins began, "we only succeeded in finding Marie Bédon this evening and I thought it would be best to question her in the presence of Mrs. Harding and yourself. She denies all knowledge of the missing articles."

John looked directly at the maid, then he turned to Elkins.

"I should prefer, Mr. Elkins, to have you ask whatever questions you wish answered."

"Very well, I will do so. Mademoiselle," he began, quietly addressing Marie, "I presume you attended your mistress the night before you left her employ?"

"Certainly, yes, I undressed madame." The answer sounded as if she considered the question a rather childish one.

"Do you recall what jewels Mrs. Harding wore on that occasion?"

Marie glanced furtively from the detective to the beautiful woman sitting quietly near by. Some instinct told Isabelle that the girl was hesitating because she wanted her reply to accommodate itself to her wishes. Why this should be so she could not imagine, but, for the girl's sake and because of her own predicament in the loss of her memory, she felt it incumbent upon her to encourage Marie by some remark, so she said with a friendly smile which went straight to the French girl's heart:

"Please tell the gentlemen every detail you can recall, Marie. Your memory is probably better than mine."

She was inwardly amused at the unguessed depths of truth in her remark.

"Madame wore on that occasion a tiara of diamonds and her pearl necklace."

"You mean a necklace composed of three strands of good-sized pearls?"

"But yes, of course."

"No bracelets or pins?"

"Nothing else, monsieur."

"Did you remove this tiara and necklace?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Where did you put them?"

"I handed them to madame."

"And then what?"

Marie tapped her foot impatiently.

"And then"—she emphasized the word with a sarcastic smile—"madame put them in their cases and walked into her closet—what you call it?—and shut the door and put them in her safe. Then she came back into her bedroom."

"But you did not see her put them in the safe?"

"Certainly not!" The answer was crisp. "I was never present when madame opened her safe."

"Then do you not know that Mrs. Harding put them in her safe?"

"Where else would she put them, pray, monsieur?"

Where else, indeed? And, even supposing she had neglected to close the safe properly, why should any thief leave behind him an article as valuable as this necklace?"

The maid's manner puzzled Elkins. Her replies seemed straightforward and truthful enough, but they lacked spontaneity. He felt convinced that every word she uttered was carefully weighed and considered before it was permitted to pass her lips. Her motive for this extreme caution perplexed him more than he would have cared to admit even to himself. His next question took the maid somewhat by surprise.

"Why did you so suddenly leave Mrs. Harding's employ?"

Marie's quick brain and steady nerves kept her from flushing under his searching gaze.

"What does Monsieur Elkins mean by 'suddenly'?" she asked innocently.

"I mean, why did you leave Mr. Harding's house without his knowledge or even suspicion of your plans?"



"It was not my place to inform monsieur," she replied coldly. "It was madame who engaged me, and if she did not tell monsieur that I was to leave her, it was because she did not think it of great importance."

"Then I am to understand that you displeased Mrs. Harding and that she discharged you?"

Marie's wits were quick, but her indignation for the moment was quicker.

"I, displease madame? Never, monsieur!"

Elkins concealed his satisfaction and resumed quietly:

"Then you were not discharged. You went of your own free will?"

"Yes, monsieur." She glanced apprehensively at Isabelle.

"You sent your trunk away some days before, but you left the house with Mrs. Harding. Where did you go then?"

Marie's cheeks grew rosy red and her eyes flashed.

"Surely madame can best answer that question. Why should you ask me?"

"Please answer my question, mademoiselle."

There was an insistence in Elkins' tone at which she rebelled, but a sudden thought kept back an impulsive reply and she said quietly instead:

"Madame had an appointment at the dressmaker's and I went with her to assist her."

"What is the dressmaker's address?"

There was no hesitation in her reply.

"— West Thirty-eighth Street, monsieur."

John stirred restlessly and glanced at his watch. Then he turned to the detective.

"May I ask you, Mr. Elkins, if you are nearly finished? My wife has not been well and I prefer that she should not be distressed by all these inquiries."

"We can close this interview any time you say, Mr. Harding. I supposed you would wish to have the matter

thoroughly investigated. I regret any distress to Mrs. Harding, but it was necessary to put certain questions to her maid in her presence. If you wish, I will stop now."

Isabelle interceded quickly.

"Oh, no, Mr. Elkins! I am sure my husband does not wish that at all. The fact is"—she smiled pathetically—"since my accident, I have forgotten many little things. I cannot recall, for instance, where I was going that morning. I should be glad, Marie," she said, smiling at the girl, "if you would tell Mr. Elkins all you know about it."

The tone of her voice, as well as the expression of her face, was so full of sincerity that, for the first time, a conviction swept over John which dispelled his past doubts as to the meaning of her silence on the painful subject of her intended destination the morning her taxi was wrecked.

Elkins, however, was a man who rarely allowed a sincere tone of voice or a frank glance from feminine eyes to bias his judgment. He mentally reserved his decision as to her sincerity for some future time.

As for Marie, at the word "accident" she had visibly started, and an exclamation almost escaped her lips. But she controlled herself and met Isabelle's open gaze with a look which was inscrutable. The girl did some rapid thinking and, as a result of it, she said with grave dignity:

"I have already told you, Monsieur Elkins, that I went to the dressmaker's with madame. From there I went to the house of Madame Summers, my present mistress."

John, who had grown momentarily more ill at ease, once more glanced at his watch and, rising, turned to Isabelle.

"You are tired, dear. I would suggest that you leave us now."

Isabelle rose.

"If Mr. Elkins can spare me." She

bowed to the detective who stood watching her intently and then turned, smiling, to Marie.

"*Au revoir, Marie.*"

As the eyes of the two women met, something in Marie's expression made Isabelle aware of the nervous tension under which the girl was laboring.

"You will come and see me some day, Marie?" she added, trying to be natural.

"*Merçi bien, madame. Au revoir, madame.*"

With another bow to the men, Isabelle left the room.

When they had again seated themselves, Elkins once more addressed Marie.

"You say, mademoiselle, that Mrs. Harding went to the dressmaker's. Why did she take her jewel case with her?"

Absolutely ignorant as she was of how Elkins knew, or of what, precisely, his ground was for assuming that Mrs. Harding had left the house with a suit case and a jewel case, she realized what a difficult game she must play. She loved her mistress and she loved herself. The mention of an accident and Isabelle's statement of her inability to remember the events of the morning, filled her small head with confusion. She was groping about, as it were, in the dark, but she felt more convinced than ever that Isabelle trusted her implicitly and she determined not to betray that trust if she could help it. She would try to play fair both to Madame Harding and to herself. She faced Elkins bravely with a little scornful laugh.

"Madame take her jewel case to the dressmaker's! What absurdity!"

"It's strange, since you left Mrs. Harding on such friendly terms," pursued Elkins, "that you did not notify her of your new address. She has not known where you were."

"*Tiens*, that is funny!" There was a

note of surprise in her voice which sounded genuine. "I cannot write very good English and my letter it must have not reached madame."

"Your letter?"

"Why, yes. I wrote to madame to tell her where I was. Madame knows that Marie would not forget her very great kindness."

Again Elkins was obliged to conceal his chagrin.

"Very well, mademoiselle. Thank you for the frankness of all your replies to my questions." He bowed to her with a twinkle of mirth in his usually heavy eyes and a mocking smile on his lips.

"I am glad I have satisfied monsieur, *le detective*," was her cold rejoinder.

"Have you any further questions you would like to ask the girl, Mr. Harding?" said Elkins.

John replied that he had not, and Elkins rose.

"I'll communicate with you in a day or so," said Elkins.

John accompanied them to the lower hall, and a moment later hurried to Isabelle's room. She was standing by the window, so absorbed that she did not hear his knock nor his footstep when he entered. As she turned, he saw that she was very pale.

"Why, dear one, what is it?"

"Oh, John," she said eagerly, "*please* don't pursue this affair of the jewelry! I'm *sure* I'll find it somewhere or recall where I left it, as soon as my memory gets better."

"But," he demurred gently, "Elkins may be able to expedite matters."

"But I *hate* all this detective business! *Please* drop it, John! I'm sure that girl is innocent."

He wondered at her excited insistence, then reminded himself that her nerves were badly strained.

"I'll be blessed if I catch the point of some of the questions Elkins asked," he said, frowning. "And I'm inclined

to agree with you that Marie had nothing to do with the matter. There's something about her manner toward you, dearest, that convinces me she couldn't have done such a thing."

"I'm sure she didn't steal my jewels!" Isabelle vaguely questioned the source of her conviction even as she expressed it.

"So she left you of her own accord, dear?" John saw the color deepen in her cheeks and he noted the old pained look of anxious questioning in her eyes. He hastily added before she could reply: "Well, you've got a capital maid now, anyway, even if she is not so pretty as Marie. You're quite satisfied with Rose, aren't you, dear?"

"Perfectly. She's a kind, thoughtful creature, and she takes better care of me than I could ever take of myself."

Later, in his bedroom, John lighted a cigarette and threw himself on the lounge for an undisturbed reverie. His thoughts reverted to the cross-questioning of Marie. What a queer jumble it all was! But, thank God for one thing! Isabelle did *not* recall where she had been going that morning. She had not deceived him about that, and, moreover, she remembered no more about it now than she had before. One thing was clear. She had not been going out of town, after all. Marie had said that Isabelle went to the dressmaker's and he believed her. He would see Doctor Bowyer in the morning and tell him that they were both mistaken in thinking that his wife had been on her way out of town on that eventful day.

It all seemed reasonable enough, now that he considered it in the light of this new information. After leaving the dressmaker's, Isabelle had started downtown to go to some shop. Then the accident had occurred. Of course she had gone to the dressmaker's! That explained everything. Marie would have no object in lying about the

matter, for, after all, it had nothing whatever to do with the disappearance of the jewels.

Which soliloquy shows very plainly that John, although a man of uncommon intellect, was not destined by nature—certainly not trained by circumstance—to be a Sherlock Holmes, nor even an everyday, commonplace detective such as our friend, Mr. Joseph Elkins.

## CHAPTER X.

The strong west wind blew a flurry of wet snowflakes into Marie's face as she stepped from the Harding home, accompanied by the two men.

Across the way, the flickering street lamps brought into sharp relief the trees bordering the Avenue. They stood out black and gaunt against the deepening shadows of the park beyond, tossing their protesting branches upward toward the sullen, storm-swept sky.

The girl hesitated on the top step as her eyes traveled swiftly over the desolate outlook. She shivered slightly and drew her fur collar closer about her throat, with a quick, impatient movement.

"Mademoiselle, will it be convenient for you to meet me to-morrow? I imagine we have still some things to talk over," said Elkins.

She looked sharply up at him.

"I have told you all I know, monsieur." She held her muff against her face and he could not read her expression.

"Nevertheless," he persisted, "I should like to see you to-morrow, say about ten o'clock in the morning? Can you come to my rooms at that hour?"

"It will be impossible for me to come in the morning, but the afternoon I have free. Shall I come then to see monsieur?"

"Why, yes. Let us say about two o'clock. Here is my address." He handed her his card.

"I will come—*grand plaisir*." She smiled ironically.

The following morning at half past nine, Joseph Elkins might have been seen entering the dressmaking establishment of Madame Binnie on West Thirty-eighth Street.

It had occurred to him, after leaving Blake the previous night, that it might be as well to investigate Marie's statement as to Mrs. Harding's alleged visit to her modiste, before his expected interview with the French maid.

As he sat waiting in Madame Binnie's daintily furnished reception room, he made swift note of the many outward evidences of worldly success, common he had been told, among New York's modern "smart" dressmakers.

Madame Binnie herself, with a pretty, tired face, delicately berouged and bedyed, and apparel of expensive simplicity, further emphasized, as she stepped lightly into the room, the kind and degree of success she had attained.

"Yes, I am Madame Binnie," she acknowledged in answer to his inquiry.

"I wish," Elkins began, "to obtain, if possible, a little information with regard to Mrs. John Harding's French maid, Marie Bédon."

"Will you not come into my office, Mr. Elkins? The bell has just rung and we may be interrupted here."

He assented and followed her to a small room at the rear. She motioned him to a chair and glanced inquiringly at him as she sat down.

"You may recall," Elkins continued, "that Mrs. Harding came here on the morning of the twenty-fourth of February. Can you tell me if her maid, Marie, was with her on that occasion?"

Madame Binnie smiled in amused tolerance.

"Really, Mr. Elkins, so many people come and go, I cannot possibly remember a detail of that sort. I am not even sure that Mrs. Harding herself was here on the special date you mention."

"It was the morning of her accident." Elkins threw out the remark as if to assist her lagging memory.

Madame Binnie's eyes opened a little wider.

"Ah, yes, now I do remember perfectly. Mrs. Harding *did* come here that morning. She made a payment on her account, for she said she was going away for some little time and did not wish to leave it until her return. That is how I remember her visit so distinctly. Mrs. Harding is always so considerate of poor people like myself," she added with a bright smile.

"You knew of her accident, of course?"

"Oh, yes! I heard of it the next day. I understand that she has since been seriously indisposed."

Elkins thought he detected a shade of restraint in her manner. He could not guess that it was caused solely by the regretful reflection on the part of Madame Binnie that one of her very best patrons had seemed to ignore her existence for weeks past—indeed, ever since the morning she had made the payment on her account.

Elkins, having gained the information he had come for, continued with polite insistence his attempt to secure the data he pretended to desire.

"But in regard to Marie Bédon. You cannot tell me if she came also on that occasion?"

"No, really, I remember nothing at all about the maid. She may have waited for her mistress in the taxicab. What is there so mysterious about this girl, Marie Bédon?" added the dressmaker with a keen look at the detective. "She is still with Mrs. Harding, is she not?"

"I believe she is no longer with her." Elkins was very casual as he rose and bowed. "I apologize for troubling you, Madame Binnie, about such a small matter, and I thank you for giving me your attention."

"Small matters are often as important as big ones." She smiled and bowed. "Good day, Mr. Elkins."

From Madame Binnie's establishment Elkins went to see Nancy de Koven. He was admitted distrustingly by the maid and given a grudging interview with Nancy. No, she knew nothing of Marie Bédon. She did not know that Marie had left Mrs. Harding. Why couldn't he find out from Mrs. Harding? Elkins explained that the former mistress of Marie did not know her present whereabouts.

Nancy excused herself to meet an appointment and Elkins took his departure. At the door of the reception room he turned to her.

"Mr. Thomas Carewe left town, did he not, at the time of Mrs. Harding's accident?"

Nancy gave him a withering look.

"I see no connection, Mr. Elkins, between the maid you are looking for and the date of Mr. Carewe's departure from New York."

"Oh, none—none at all," said Elkins hurriedly. "Just an idle question, Mrs. de Koven."

"I didn't know," she answered quickly, "that detectives were in the habit of asking idle questions."

"Oh, we do occasionally. We're just human, you know." He lingered, fingering his hat, and Nancy moved impatiently. "I'm impelled to ask another idle question, Mrs. de Koven. Mr. Carewe is an intimate friend of the Hardings, is he not?"

Nancy drew herself up to her full five feet, three inches, and her eyes held a defensive look which conveyed to Elkins precisely what she did not wish to convey.

"Mr. Elkins, detectives have a habit, it appears, of asking questions which are as impertinent as they are idle." And she turned her back on him.

He smiled as he walked down the

street. Mrs. de Koven was evidently in Mrs. Harding's confidence and knew all about her friendship with Carewe.

That afternoon, leisurely smoking with Blake in his rooms, Elkins remarked:

"By the way, Bobby, I paid a visit to Madame Binnie, Mrs. Harding's swell dressmaker, this morning."

"The dickens you did! What did you find out?" The match which Blake had just lighted burned down to his fingers unnoticed and with an exclamation he threw it into the fire.

"The information I acquired was just what I went for and about what I expected. Our little friend, Marie, did tell the truth in part. Mrs. Harding sure enough did visit her dressmaker on the morning of February twenty-fourth. Also, my boy, I called on Mrs. de Koven. She's a clever little puss, but she has expressive eyes. I asked a few embarrassing questions about the man, Carewe, and—well—I embarrassed her, and she thought I didn't know it. And, by the way," added Elkins, after a short pause, "I almost forgot to mention another little matter. I looked up Carewe's apartment on Fifty-seventh Street, and found out through a hallboy that he had sublet to S. I. Davenport."

Blake sat staring at the burning coals. Mechanically he struck another match and lighted his pipe.

"But say, Joe, I kind of think you might turn over some of these minor details you're always talking about, to me. Where do I come in, anyway? You said you needed another man on this case, but so far I haven't done a thing except play a sort of tail to your kite, and this morning I missed even that privilege."

"Hold on, Bobby. We haven't finished with his case yet, and, remember, an ordinary kite won't fly without its



tail. Your chance will come, don't worry! I didn't need you this morning. Two of us might have overwhelmed the ladies."

"All right, Joe. It just seemed as if I was about as much use as a last year's bird's nest. How did you get around the dressmaker?"

"Nothing very subtle, kid. I couldn't put up any bluff—it wouldn't have worked. I went straight at it and said I wanted information about Marie, Mrs. Harding's maid."

"Humph! Sounds like the tread of a fairy foot."

Elkins laughed.

"I asked her if Marie went there with her mistress on the morning of the twenty-fourth. That seemed to amuse the lady. She said she couldn't possibly remember such details—wasn't even sure Mrs. Harding had been there that particular day. Then I reminded her it was the day of Mrs. Harding's accident. That woke her up. She suddenly remembered that Mrs. Harding had gone there to pay her account as she was going away for some time. But of Marie she recalled nothing, so the girl may or may not have been with her mistress on that occasion."

"Well, you're all right, Joe. Less of an elephant than I thought."

## CHAPTER XI.

The doorbell rang and Elkins stepped into the hallway of his little apartment to open the door. He greeted Marie and led her back into the room. Blake rose with alacrity as she entered. Her dark eyes flashed at him and she smiled.

"*Bon jour, Monsieur Blake.*"

"Good afternoon, mademoiselle." Blake eagerly pushed forward a chair which she accepted with a slight inclination of her head.

Then she looked leisurely and a trifle superciliously about the room. On this

occasion it was in a particularly hopeless state. Fragments of torn paper, which had just missed the wastebasket, lay scattered in a wide circle. Small gray heaps of cigar ashes, which had carefully evaded the various ash trays, here and there spotted the rug by the fireplace.

Elkins was amused at the inventory Marie was evidently taking of the room and he faced her again with a smile.

"Pardon the appearance of my den, mademoiselle. I'm afraid a bachelor makes a poor housekeeper."

"Ah, but it is all right, monsieur. I am afraid I have brought in much snow." She glanced down at her overshoes.

"Don't mind that," he replied cheerfully.

Marie unfastened her fur collar and threw it back.

"Monsieur will now proceed with—what you call it—the third degree?"

Her tone was light, but Elkins thought he detected a little tremor in her voice. He observed her thoughtfully for a second and her eyes fell under his direct gaze.

"I am sorry that I had to ask you to come all the way over here, mademoiselle, but there are some things which we must talk over in private and I could think of no better place."

She shrugged her small shoulders, her eyes fixed on her muff.

"It is no trouble, monsieur, but I have already told you that of the jewels I know nothing. I have told you the truth."

"I am sure of that, mademoiselle, but you must remember that we have only your word for this, and others may not accept it as readily as I have."

She glanced at him sharply, but her expression was enigmatic.

"I have no doubt," he went on, "that everything you have told us is true, but there still remain some things which you have not told."

Her small frame stiffened and her eyes flashed.

"I do not know what monsieur is talking about."

A slight movement of Blake's attracted the girl's attention and she glanced nervously over her shoulder.

Elkins' contemplative gaze had not left her face. Uneasily aware of his scrutiny, she sat with bent head, her fingers twisting and untwisting a handkerchief which she had drawn from her muff.

"Mademoiselle, I want you to tell me where Mrs. Harding was going on the morning of February twenty-fourth, the day you left her employ."

Her mouth set in the obstinate lines he had observed during their first interview, and she gazed steadily at her restless fingers.

"I have already told monsieur." Her tone was sullen.

Blake again moved restlessly, but she did not look up.

"I must remind you, Mademoiselle Marie, that you are in the hands of your friends"—Elkins' voice was kind—"and you will do well to be perfectly frank with us. No, don't interrupt," as she made a slight movement as if to speak. "I want you to tell me all you know about this case. There is no question of disloyalty to your former mistress. It is to her advantage that we should know the whole truth." He paused a moment and then resumed: "I know that on the morning in question Mrs. Harding started on a journey. I also know that you were aware of her intention and that you assisted her."

With a movement which seemed to tighten every muscle in her body, she started forward in her chair.

"How does monsieur know that?"

Elkins ignored the question.

"I know, in spite of your attempt at denial, that Mrs. Harding carried her jewel case. You were the last person seen with her and if you would

clear yourself of the suspicion of having been implicated in the theft of the jewels and avoid publicity for Mrs. Harding you will have to be more frank with me than you have been so far."

Marie's eyes were now wide open and filled with a puzzled wonder.

"But, monsieur, madame can tell you. Why do you ask me? Why do you not go to madame?"

"Mrs. Harding cannot remember," Elkins replied dryly.

"Cannot remember," she repeated incredulously. "Why can she not remember?"

"Her accident caused a partial loss of memory. At any rate, she claims to remember nothing which occurred that morning."

"Oh, yes, the accident!" Marie exclaimed breathlessly. "Madame was injured? Will not monsieur tell me about it?"

"You really did not know that Mrs. Harding had been injured?"

"*Mais non.*" She leaned forward, her hands excitedly opening and shutting on the handkerchief. "Madame spoke of an accident last night, but I could not understand."

"A taxicab in which she was riding, a few hours after you were known to have left the house, was wrecked and she was carried home unconscious in an ambulance, accompanied by her husband."

"By Monsieur Harding?" There was a ring of incredulity in the words.

"Yes!" Elkins regarded her closely.

"But I do not understand. She was alone? She was not with—" Marie broke off suddenly and then added, as she bent her head over her muff, "I'm very sorry for madame."

Elkins gave Blake a quick, significant look.

"Where was Mrs. Harding going?" he asked, again turning his attention to Marie.

She twisted restlessly in her chair.

"How should I know, monsieur?" Her eyes did not meet his.

"But I know that you do," he retorted.

"Monsieur is very clever. How does he know this?"

"From what you told me with your own lips at Mrs. Summer's! Shall I repeat your words?"

She glanced through the window at the murky, smoke-ridden sky. It had stopped snowing and a rising wind battered at the casement. A little frown appeared between her brows as she drew them closer together in an effort to recall what she had said at Mrs. Summer's. Then of a sudden she remembered, and Elkins was made aware of it by the quick change in her expression.

She was in a quandary. She wondered how much this big, clumsy man knew. She had little respect for detectives in general, and it had seemed to her a very simple matter to outwit this one, but somehow she had failed. She was ready and willing to assist Madame Harding as far as lay in her power, but what could she do? They had told her that madame had lost her memory; madame herself had admitted as much. Had she really lost it? One speculation after another raced through her brain, but all the while she was conscious that Elkins' inscrutable eyes were fixed watchfully upon her face. At last she came to a decision. If madame had really forgotten everything, then it was her duty to protect her mistress from the far-reaching consequences of the publicity which Elkins had threatened.

"Oh, it is no use," she sighed, and made a little tragic gesture with her hands. "I will tell monsieur all I know." She faltered a moment. "Where would monsieur wish me to begin?"

"Tell the story in your own words,

mademoiselle. Begin where you please."

Again she hesitated in evident concentration of thought.

"It is a long story, monsieur, but you will wish only the important parts, *n'est-ce pas?*"

Elkins nodded.

"Then I will tell monsieur, but first I must beg him to believe that I do not know where are the jewels of madame. Yesterday I did but try to fool you, for madame *did* carry them with her when she left her home, locked safely in her jewel box."

Elkins again nodded gravely.

"All of them, mademoiselle?"

She met his searching gaze squarely.

"I did not see what madame placed in the box, for I was not with her at the time. Her jewels she ever kept locked in the small safe. *You*, monsieur, will know best what she carried with her."

"We won't go into that further now. Tell me, why did Mrs. Harding leave her home?"

"Ah, it is not for me to say why madame did this or why she did that!" the French girl exclaimed vehemently. "It is sufficient that madame desired to go. When she told me she was going I did not ask any questions; I did only as madame directed. What would you? Madame is proud and she has a way with her, and, also, I loved madame."

Her dark eyes flashed and her pretty red lips were tightly compressed as she looked defiantly at him.

"I understand perfectly, mademoiselle, but I am sure that you must know her reason for leaving home. Remember, this is a time for plain speaking."

Her eyes fell and her manner grew more calm.

"Monsieur is right." She spoke in a low tone. "It was that madame was not happy in her home. Monsieur

Harding was very good, but he did not understand madame."

"Was there not some one else who understood her better?"

She looked quickly at him.

"Monsieur knows everything."

There was thinly veiled sarcasm in her voice. "Yes, it is so. There was one who did understand madame."

"When did Mrs. Harding decide to go?"

"Is it necessary that monsieur should know this?" A little angry flush reddened her cheeks.

"Yes," he replied grimly, "it is necessary."

She hesitated so long that he was on the point of speaking again. Blake was evidently deriving the greatest amusement out of the encounter; his eyes danced and it was apparent to Elkins that his assistant's sympathies were, so to speak, in the enemy's camp. Then she looked up at him with an apologetic smile.

"Pardon, monsieur. For me it is so difficult to remember dates. It was three or four nights before madame left, I think. She returned from an entertainment very late. She was very beautiful that night and she was very nervous and excited. She told me then that she would go away and that she could not take me with her. I was—oh, so unhappy and begged madame to take me, but she said she could not. She said that later, perhaps, she would send for me."

"Did she tell you where she intended to go?"

"No, monsieur, she did not." Then, as she detected a flash of disbelief in his expression, she cried: "Monsieur, I speak the truth! She did not tell me and I would not ask her—never!"

"But you went with her that morning?"

"To the dressmaker's, yes, as I have already told monsieur."

"What I want you to tell me is where

you accompanied Mrs. Harding after you left the dressmaker's."

"I did not say that I accompanied madame anywhere after that," she replied sullenly.

"But it is within my knowledge that you did." This was a straining of the truth, but Elkins felt that the occasion demanded it.

"How does monsieur know that?" she flashed back at him.

"Because it is my business to know."

"Why then should monsieur trouble himself to ask me about it?" she inquired with a saucy tilt of her head.

"Because it is your business to answer my questions," he said calmly.

"Who can say monsieur is not always right?" She spoke softly.

"Then you did leave the dressmaker's with madame?"

"Yes, monsieur, I was on my way to Madame Summer's, who had engaged me through the kindness of a countrywoman of mine and I did but remain with Madame Harding to be of service while she needed me."

"Ah, so that is why you did not apply for a position at Mrs. Brown's agency!" There was a note of marked satisfaction in Elkins' voice.

"Monsieur leaves not a place untouched by his clever hand," she remarked dryly.

"What did Mrs. Harding carry with her?"

"Oh, but very little, monsieur. She had a steamer trunk, her suit case, and the jewel box—that was all." She again fell silent and glanced idly about the room.

"Well, mademoiselle, please go on." Elkins was politely insistent. "Where did you and Mrs. Harding go after leaving the dressmaker's?"

"Surely, monsieur must already know," she said innocently.

"It is late and we have already wasted considerable time. Please con-

fine yourself to answering my questions for I have other business to attend to."

She looked steadily into his eyes and she realized her own helplessness. Certainly she had done her best to shield her adored mistress. She could do no more. When she spoke again her voice and manner were quiet and restrained.

"I called the taxi for madame after Monsieur Harding left for the office. We drove to the dressmaker's and I sat in the cab while madame went in. In a few minutes she returned and gave to the chauffeur some directions which I did not hear. And then we stopped in front of an apartment house and madame got out and I carried her suit case inside and gave it to the boy. She told me to return to the cab and to wait until she sent me word. In a few minutes the porter came for the trunk and the boy brought me a message from madame. It was her wish that I should go. I then went to Madame Summer's."

"Is that all that you know regarding this matter? Would you swear to it?"

"Yes, monsieur," she replied simply, and something in her voice convinced him that she was now speaking the absolute truth.

"One more question and you may go, mademoiselle. Tell me the street and number of this apartment house."

She had started to draw her fur collar about her neck, but as he spoke, her hands dropped listlessly to her lap. She bowed her head and pressed one hand against her eyes. Presently she looked up and her face was flushed.

"Oh, such a poor memory have I for these American streets and numbers! I cannot remember—I forget."

"Let me refresh your memory, mademoiselle. The apartment was on Fifty-seventh Street, just east of Lexington Avenue. It has six stories and is a large white-stone building with a big arched doorway."

Her eyes were fixed on his face in fascinated wonder. When she did not reply he asked:

"Am I not right?"

"There are so many houses, monsieur——" she faltered.

"I am describing the house in which Mr. Thomas Carewe has his apartment. Did not Mrs. Harding go to his apartment? Answer me," he commanded firmly.

At the mention of Carewe's name the girl gave a startled exclamation.

"Monsieur Carewe! What do you know of Monsieur Carewe?" She leaned toward Elkins in her excitement.

"That again is my business, mademoiselle."

"Monsieur knows everything." She leaned back in her chair and half closed her eyes.

"It was to his apartment, then, that you accompanied Mrs. Harding?"

"Monsieur is right as usual." She slowly gathered her fur about her neck and fastened it. "Monsieur is satisfied? He has no more questions to ask?"

"No, I guess that is about all," said Elkins slowly.

"It is well, monsieur." She rose as she spoke.

Elkins' eyes encountered those of Blake in a look of mutual understanding, but if he was elated at the result of the interview, he carefully concealed the fact.

"I have no more questions to ask, mademoiselle," he said, rising. "Thank you for giving yourself the trouble to come here. I trust I shall not be obliged to annoy you again with regard to this matter."

"I trust not, monsieur," she answered with quiet dignity as she walked toward the door. Blake opened it for her and they went through the hall and out into the vestibule. As they waited for the elevator Blake held out his hand to her



in a boyish, impulsive desire to show his friendliness toward her.

For a second she hesitated, then she glanced up into his good-looking young face and, with a smile which seemed to thank him for his belief in her, she put out a small gloved hand which he took eagerly in his large one.

"Au revoir, Monsieur Blake. Some time I may see you on some more pleasant occasion, *n' est-ce pas?* Perhaps, monsieur"—her smile grew roguish—"perhaps at the next French ball."

"You will see me again, mademoiselle," was his brief reply as she withdrew her hand.

Then she turned to Elkins.

"Au revoir, Monsieur Elkins."

"Good-by, mademoiselle. Good luck to you!"

Back in Elkins' room, Blake said, frowning:

"Well you certainly gave the dear girl a damn poor time of it!"

"And," said Elkins, laughing, "I got the information I wanted—although it didn't surprise me much. I'd already made up my mind that Carewe is concerned with the affair."

Blake stared at him.

"Mean you found out anything special about him?"

"Yes. I was going to tell you about it when that girl arrived. I got some dope from a man this morning who is pretty well posted. It seems Carewe has speculated lately and lost heavily. Mrs. Harding may have *loaned* him her jewels to help him out."

"Don't believe it!" Blake was emphatic. "You've got to cook up something better than that, old man."

"Of course," Elkins went on slowly, "she might have left his apartment intending to join him on the steamer; or she may have had a change of heart and started for her home—no, that's impossible, for the accident occurred at Thirty-fourth Street. Well, it doesn't matter where she was headed

for or why she left the jewels with Carewe, *he* was left in a damned embarrassing position for he couldn't get the jewels back to her."

"But what made him go off regardless of her accident?" Blake was puzzled.

"Good Lord!" Elkins moved impatiently. "I don't know their *motives*! All I know is that he left town, and it's a cinch she had planned to go with him. As to the jewels, I believe he put them in his safe or took them along. My job is to get in touch with him before I go on with this case."

"Couldn't you see Mrs. Harding alone and get a line on the thing from her?"

"My dear fellow, she poses as an interesting case of amnesia. I don't believe it for a moment, of course. She's using it as a cloak to cover a rash venture which ended in failure."

"Well, what's your next move?"

"My next move, kid, is to Carewe's apartment. I'll try to get his address from the man, Davenport; also, I'll verify—if I can—Marie's confession that Mrs. Harding went there that day."

"And what am I to do?" asked Blake.

"Here's your little job. Go to the shipping offices and look over the passenger lists for sailings on February twenty-fourth—and for the twenty-fifth, as some of the boats sail at one a. m. I've got a hunch Carewe left the country, and very likely on one of the new boats. Look for Mrs. Harding's name, too, of course. Then meet me here at five."

When Blake returned he found Elkins deep in thought over his pipe. Blake wore a triumphant grin.

"Got the dope!" he announced. "Carewe sailed via the Mediterranean, early a. m., the twenty-fifth, *Princess Irene*. Saw his name big as life, but couldn't find hers on any sailing list."

"Good for you, kid. Your luck was better than mine. I saw Davenport. Very polite, decent beggar, but nothing doing when it came to giving me Carewe's address. Said he'd send any message for me through Carewe's bankers."

"How about Marie's story?"

"Oh, I corroborated all that. A woman, supposed to be Carewe's sister, did go there the day Carewe left town, but I couldn't find out at what hour she left the apartment or when he left it. And there's a new porter, so I couldn't get a line on where his baggage was taken. However, we've got enough between us."

"Too damn much, I should say!" Blake's elation was subdued.

"Guess you're right, kid. Carewe's movements seem pretty open—no apparent attempt at secrecy—but I'd stake my last dollar on his having those jewels or knowing where they are."

"You've struck a snag," said Blake. "How can you go on with the case unless you put it up to Harding?"

"I've got to put it up to him, but I'm afraid I've opened up a compromising situation." Elkins looked worried.

"Gee! I don't envy you your job. What the deuce can you say to him?"

"I'll have to give him the facts before I unearth any more of them. So far, it's largely a matter of speculation. He may prefer to let it go at that. I should think he would."

"If he's just, he won't blame you for what you've unearthed."

"He's a good sort, kid, but it's a pretty dangerous subject to approach a man with. However, I've got to see the thing through, and I'll get it over with as soon as possible. I'll see Harding to-morrow afternoon, but, honestly, Bobby, I'd rather be kicked around the block."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



### THE WAYFARER

FROM head to foot the dust they saw  
Upon me as I passed, and frowned:  
They could not see me closer draw  
My flowery robe around.

They said: "The plenty of the swine  
To him were riches!"—this of me  
Who drink the Dawn's aerial wine,  
Such' food as feeds the bee.

They taunted: "Autumn's frosty teeth  
He feels when Night lets down her bars."  
But kings might envy me beneath  
My coverlid of stars.

MAHLON LEONARD FISHER.



# Snake in the Grass

By Bonnie Ginger

Author of "The Mahogany Streak,"  
"Lost Lake," etc.

VIDA MALLARD suspended her brush and said to the woman on the dais, whose portrait she was painting:

"His sister was here again this morning, with her pathetic little plaint, 'Why don't you *do* something?' Just as if he hadn't always run around with other women!"

"That's true," Julia Ord replied in her rich low voice.

"Yes, and besides, if I worried, how could I do my work? I pointed that out to her, but that only bewildered her. 'Anyhow,' I said, 'he always comes back to me.'" She worked again for a time silently. "Though there might come a time when he wouldn't. This latest affair—supposing it were serious?"

"His affair with—the dancer?" Julia asked softly.

"Yes, Pearl Primrose," Vida said decisively. "Have you ever seen her?"

"No."

"Neither have I. She's quite young." Vida painted carefully for several moments. Her next remark was entirely unexpected. "The fact is, I think it is serious. In its way, I mean—the way of passion, not love. If I thought it were real love, I wouldn't have made the decision I'm about to reveal to you. Don't lose your pose. There, that's

splendid! You're really a marvelous model, you know. I feel in my bones that this portrait is going to be my best yet. What do you think of my calling it 'Ivory and Gold'?"

"It sounds very well. What is your plan?"

But Vida had become immersed in a technical point. She was a slouchy brunette, not tall, with warm color and odd dark eyes. Her studio garb did not become her, nor was it very clean. She kept brushes behind her ears and wore a green eyeshade while painting. Nevertheless, she was a handsome woman. Already she enjoyed artistic fame.

"The plan?" she said at last. "Well, you see, he has always gone on till he tired of his amour, but this time it looks as if I'd have to act. So I'm going to."

"Well?"

"I'm going to get him back." She rolled a cigarette and went to the grate to light it. "It's this way, Julia. There are certain things I've ceased to give Glenn—diversion, excitement, attention—I've been so crazy about my art. And, after all, I owe him something, don't I? If I hadn't been so absorbed, perhaps he wouldn't have run after women so much. And all this philanthropy hasn't been good for him; he has

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neglected his own work. And it doesn't add character to him, either." She smoked energetically. "Understand, if this affair meant something good for him, I'd keep out of it. But something tells me, Julia, that it isn't good for him or for her or any one or anything. Well, then, the thing for him to do is to find out where he stands, and I'm going to help him find out." She walked back to the easel and gazed at the portrait. "Yes, I'm going to get back into the life he likes—fun, entertaining, parties, shows—and I'm going to dress for it, too. When I put my mind to it I can look like other women, you know."

"And so you mean to outdo your rival at her own game?"

"If I can. Perhaps, however, she'll give him up voluntarily."

"They seldom do," Julia murmured.

"I know," Vida answered after a pause, "but how are we to know the inner souls of people, and what may suddenly make them choose the honorable course?" She watched her model a moment. "But you look—you don't believe she will give him up?"

"I——"

"Very well, I see you don't, and so you belong to those who think——"

"Vida, I belong to those who have supposed you didn't care enough for Glenn to try to hold him, and——"

"Look out, you're losing your pose. But I do care. And if she'll not give him up, then I'll make her put up a fight. Let her come out into the open. She's received socially. Why shouldn't we fight openly? It's the underhandedness of it that's so paltry. Don't you think so, Julia?"

"You forget, Vida, that few people are as frank as you."

"Oh, I don't believe that. Most people are pretty honest. But you look tired. I'll stop work. It's lunch time, anyhow. Yes, here's Mamie bringing it

in. Put it by the fire, Mamie. But where is our friend Dale?"

"Mr. Winters is in the music room," Mamie said, wheeling the cart to the old English trencher board by the hearth. "He wouldn't come up till you were through work."

"Then send him up at once." Turning to Julia, "Now be nice to him."

"To Dale? Who wouldn't be?" Julia smiled, pausing before the mirror and gazing at the slim, golden-haired reflection. Then she passed behind the screen. A moment later a tall thin man entered, extending large tanned hands.

"Oh, Dale, you old dear!"

"Vida! And I get a kiss, don't I?"

"You certainly do, after our formal meeting yesterday. Here, thank goodness, we can be sensible! And don't be looking around wistfully; Julia's behind the screen changing."

"Hello, Dale!" Julia called. He flushed with pleasure, and when she appeared he took her hands and looked at her keenly, while she complimented him on the benefits from his year in Peru.

"And you, Julia, are wonderful! How goes the writing?"

"Pretty well, thanks."

"She's on a gorgeous novel," Vida put in, as she arranged the table.

"And do you still live in that funny old house near Sheridan Square?"

"Yes, and will you be coming to see me?"

"That's a superfluous question. Ah, Vida, lunch here in this quiet old house, by this historic grate—if you could guess how I've longed for this sort of thing!"

"And we've longed to see you back, Dale. And there's so much to tell you! Let's gossip, and then we want to hear what you've been doing."

But the gossip was not half exhausted when Mamie came to remove

the things. Still another hour passed before Vida said:

"Now we must hear about your exploits."

"But I hadn't any, Vida, except work."

"Nonsense. You were doing a great task, an impossible one. Such things are epic."

"Well, if I had your gift or Julia's, maybe I could make it seem so. Now I chiefly remember a struggle with the elements—and that includes the laborers. Really, they're as primitive and abstract as weather or topography; like the earth they remove, which is so much tonnage; and they're so much liftage or haulage or diggage. If they have individuality, you haven't time to find it. I crave individuals, and I have them now, and I'm happy."

"You were happy there," said Vida, "for you were building."

"Did you make friendships?" Julia asked. "You are so sociable!"

"Yes, but more or less hectic, artificial ones. Do you know, I've come back with a great desire to let things take their natural course? I'm sated with seeing things mapped out and diverted. I want to drift on a river that is just going to flow idly to the sea and empty into it *unutilized*."

"Then I take it you will not remain in New York?" Julia laughed.

"It's a mood," said Vida. "You're a builder, and you'll want your materials again, long before we're ready to lose you. I, too, want to build, to divert. I see force undirected, and I want to help it to find its uses. That's my new mood."

"Well, you're an artist."

"It isn't that. But tell us of the dam. Julia is eager, too. Remember, she writes, so she knows it's the struggle of the builder with the elements that is the eternal theme."

He complied, and another two hours slipped by magically,

When Julia had to leave he walked with her to her home. The way lay through Washington Square. A light snow was falling.

Her house was a small one which she had remodeled, making the ground floor into one large room. Simple lines were preserved in the decorations, and the effect was somewhat austere. Her desk stood at the far end, under a wide window. Midway of the room a big grate was piled with glowing logs. They sat here, and she made tea.

"I know," he said, as the time came for him to leave, "you'll say it's too soon for me to speak. Don't be distressed," he added, noting her quick gesture. "I'm going to say something very different from what you expect. It isn't much, either. Will you let me?"

"Dale, I had hoped you wouldn't want—I hoped you had forgotten. If it's that——"

"No, Julia. I haven't forgotten." He paused. "But—well, I've always tried to force you to care for me. That was wrong. Do you remember what I was saying at Vida's, about drifting? Well, she called it a mood, and so it is, as far as my work goes, but in *this*, it's permanent, Julia. You remember you asked me not to write to you. Well, I learned not to mind the silence; I came to prefer it. I've drifted. I'm going on drifting. If you want to come to love me, all right. If you don't, then it isn't to happen. I'm through trying to direct your feelings into my channel. I'm to be here four months. Perhaps before I go—— But if not, I shall begin to study how to forget you. And, although my love for you stirs now, when I see you again, that first excitement will pass, and I shall do nothing while I am here to force it. Strange words for an engineer, aren't they? But I mean them. You look at me so steadily, I suppose you mean, 'Does he expect me to take the initia-

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tive, if I ever come to care for him?" Yes, Julia, I do. I've dangled after you for seven years. You're a modern woman and self-supporting, so there's no reason on earth why the next word, if there is to be one, shouldn't come from you. If it doesn't come from you, it will never be spoken."

"And can you hope it will ever be spoken?" she asked, after a long silence.

"I neither hope it will be nor fear it will not be, Julia. And you are too sensible to resent my attitude. You believe the standards are equal for the sexes, so you cannot object."

"But what need is there for this drifting, as you call it? All that can be avoided right now, by my telling you——"

"No!" He rose. "I don't accept it now. You and I have changed in a year, Julia. We are progressive beings, aren't we? We have to learn each other over again. It wouldn't be fair to either if we decided it all now. And may I come to see you next week when I get back from Boston?"

"Certainly, Dale. We are old friends still, I hope." She smiled.

When he had gone she sat by the fire for a time, and then, rousing herself, she looked at the clock and immediately went to the telephone.

"Yes, it's I. . . . Yes, quite alone. . . . In twenty minutes? Good!"

And the twenty minutes were not quite up when Glenn Mallard appeared at the doorway. Seeing her standing on the hearth, he strode to her and folded her in his arms with a passionate kiss.

"But Julia, something must have happened. This thoughtfulness—has any one found out?"

"Of course not, Glenn. The devil protects us."

She was clinging to him, her self-

command discarded. But presently she freed herself with a quiet persistence and moved from him a space, and looked at him. Innumerable women must have looked at him with even more of the same primitive idolatry. He gave, in that severely æsthetic room, somewhat of the impression of a sculptured god come to life.

"Come, what are you thinking of, Julia?"

"Glenn, why are you so sure Vida isn't in love with you?"

"Oh, are we to talk of that?" He laughed, but with a touch of dissatisfaction.

"But she believes in this talk about you and the dancer. Why wouldn't she offer to free you, if she doesn't care?"

"I've had a lot of those affairs, and she knows they never last."

"I think she thinks this time it's—different."

"Nonsense! She's all wrapped up in her painting; she never thinks of it. Gracious, Julia, I've more than once said that we might as well tell her the truth, but you flew out at me!"

"Oh, Glenn, you said it, but like a child, without comprehending what it might mean to her."

"Well, then, what's wrong? You didn't want me to tell her, because you were her closest friend. You said it would humiliate her. Well, now do you *want* me to tell her because you think she cares? I don't understand you, dearest. But I know you're wrong. Vida looks on me as a sort of habit. She's fond of me and I'm tremendously fond of her, and so why aren't we to go on for the present just as we are?"

"Just as we are! Glenn, things like this aren't kept hidden forever."

He turned on her.

"Then what is it, Julia? Are we to break off?"

"Oh, Glenn!" she cried.

He came toward her quickly.

"Dale Winters is back. Is that it?"

"Now, that I simply disdain to answer."

"Isn't this his cigar?"

"He walked over with me from Vida's. And as for what you mean—why, he no longer cares. He even said so."

"What?"

"At least he strongly indicated that the past year had practically obliterated me from his mind."

"Is there another woman?"

"He didn't mention one, but—oh, Glenn, how silly! As if I cared, or ever could, for Dale!"

She was rejoiced by his jealousy. And when he drew her to him again she forgot the shame of her deceit. When his kisses were on her lips all but her love for him faded away. She did not, just then at least, even remember how, until that strange confidence of Vida's in the studio that morning, she had been making up her mind to tell Vida all.

But Vida had said: "I care for him."

Well, all the more reason now to tell the truth.

No, Vida would play with her new idea for a time, but then she would forget, and go back to her painting, and everything would go on as it was. So why should there be an estrangement? And as long as Vida thought it was the dancer, she would never really believe Glenn was serious. It would seem to her just another affair. But to find out that it was her closest friend, that it was Julia Ord!

At any rate, she need not know *now*.

## II.

Julia hung up the receiver and stared into space.

"So she's begun! I wonder if I'm to be her confidante all through her campaign. Has she no sense of privacy?"

Vida had just announced a dinner for Dale Winters.

"I'm going to put on a bit of side," she had said over the phone, "so I went to your dressmaker, Madame Gaillard. Prepare for a vision. I swear—I don't look over twenty-eight in it."

In the four years Julia had known her, she had seen nothing of Vida's social side that could be called reassuring. She had been content with a wardrobe of three evening gowns, while her other dresses were of her own creating, and she wore them usually with an air of having scrambled into them just in time to keep her engagement. She was not unknown to reveal smudges of paint. Beads were her favorite ornament and she had them in astonishing numbers, some worthless, some priceless.

And what would the dinner be like? Julia recalled her previous spasmodic entertainments, her absent-mindedness, her queer menus, her wrong combinations of people—the last a piece of carelessness which would have been disastrous with any one less lovable. Her sheer good nature and the solid fact of her artistic ability back of this irresponsibility, made outraged guests forgive.

But, at this dinner for Dale Winters, Vida was to disappoint her friends of every anticipated mischance. The guests fitted, the food was good, she remembered her duties as a hostess, refraining from letting her thoughts wander from them to the studio, and, above all, her dress not only conformed to the styles and paid the compliment of being new and clean, but it set her off marvelously. She revealed, in short, the Vida of the earlier days, spoken of by her old friends, when she had first married Glenn.

"Yes, fifteen years ago she was a jolly little butterfly," Dale had said once. And to-night there might have

been no gap between the past and the now.

One of the gayest of the merry party was Glenn. He had just returned from a trip, exuberant from success. He liked being host. To-morrow he had a rendezvous with Julia, whom the length of the table separated from him so that they had no need to dissemble. He did not even mind that Julia was on Dale's right.

Other people came after dinner. The merriment increased. Glenn and a charming little sculptress, Catherine Royds, plunged into one of their flagrant and perfectly meaningless flirtations. Dale Winters, in one of his rare conversational moods, kept many in gales of laughter with his anecdotes. There was a delightfully informal fellow who sang a great deal, simply because no one would let him stop.

Of course, wherever groups formed small enough, Vida was the topic. If she would only keep up this sort of thing! A few may have guessed her motive for beginning it. If she suspected so, it did not bother her.

But what did Glenn think of Vida? Julia watched him and could not tell. He was always extremely nice to her because he was extremely fond of her, and, moreover, he had known her like this before. This was the Vida he, the fickle, had cared for enough to marry.

Dale had come up and was talking, when both were arrested by a little scene at the piano, where Glenn had joined Vida and the singing gentleman. They saw him urge her, and then slip his arm around her, at which, laughing, she yielded, and he turned at once and announced:

"My wife has consented to render her famous imitation of *Señorita Dolores de los Pimientos*, the Castilian diva direct from Madrid."

Acclamations greeted this, and the singing young man struck up a florid

air at the piano, while Vida, taking an attitude, began a somewhat subtle and quite delicious travesty. She knew Spanish well enough, being a native of southern California, to misuse it very funnily. The performance was a familiar one of hers, and perennially side-splitting. Even Julia laughed heartily. Yet she was haunted by the manner in which Glenn had said "My wife." The words had seemed so permanent, so solid.

She left early, pretending a headache.

"Well, Julia," Vida asked, going into the hall with her, "do you think I've started well? Have I a chance to recapture my Don Juan?"

"I hadn't the faintest idea you could be such a hostess," Julia replied evasively. "Every one is raving about you."

"I'm rather crazy about myself," Vida smiled, eying herself in the mirror.

"Why did you wear that dress?" Glenn asked next day, as she joined him at lunch. "It isn't becoming."

"I didn't want to revive Dale's passion by being too beautiful," she said.

His irrelevant reply was:

"Wasn't Vida ripping? She's a great girl! I'm glad she's going in for fun again. She has such delightful social instinct, when she forgets her art. Not that I'd like her to neglect that. By the way, she showed me your portrait this morning. Really, I think it's magnificent! Don't you?"

"It flatters me," she answered craftily.

"No. Even Vida's art couldn't do that. But it shows a something in you, an elusive wistfulness behind your pride and self-possession—the something I see, that makes me want to fold you close to me, to protect you." And he took her hand.

She lowered her gaze.

"Let's talk of you," he said. "I've been away a week, and last night didn't count."

"No, thanks to you." She laughed. And when he stared, she went on. "I know it was to guard our secret, but need you really have avoided me? That might be even more conspicuous than open flirting."

"You're thinking of Catherine Royds!" he cried.

"Glenn, how ridiculous!"

He managed to kiss her hand.

"You have no rival," he said, with a look that made her breath shorten and her lids lower over the flame in her eyes.

### III.

To Julia's intense relief, the sittings had ended. Vida had made a point of finishing the portrait because then she meant to take a holiday from the studio, she said. Apparently she was satisfied with the way her plan was going, and she had mapped out a long program of social events of all sorts, to last, it would seem, throughout the winter.

Julia watched Glenn's reaction carefully. His attitude was one of amused satisfaction. "It's doing her no end of good to play around this way," he said, "and I hope you encourage her in it. Julia thought that he, at any rate, encouraged her. Certainly he went out oftener with her, and stayed at home for many of her parties, even those which Julia did not attend.

Julia evaded some invitations on the plea of work, although her writing was actually in a miserable state, and she unable, apparently, to better it. But going to Vida's parties involved too much hypocrisy. Also, she found that she was jealous of even this small and pathetic result of Vida's strategy, begrudging the time Glenn gave his wife out of mere indulgent affection.

However, as the season advanced, Julia began to modify somewhat her

disesteem of Vida's powers. In the first place, having turned her mind to entertaining and going out, Vida was soon carrying out the campaign almost as skillfully as she carried out her artistic activities. In the second place, a man like Glenn Mallard naturally likes his wife to shine socially, and more than once, as the time went on, he expressed his pride in this new popularity of hers.

Vida was planning a very special affair for Washington's Birthday, and Glenn went to Julia to urge her attendance.

"You haven't paid her the compliment of coming for ages! I think she's hurt, Julia. I can't understand it. It's funny that just when she lays aside her work for a good healthy holiday, you bury yourself in your writing. I don't think you love any one or anything but your writing, after all."

It was the first time he had ever spoken to her irritably. But, although she resented his tone and was jealous of his interest in the party, she concealed her anger and said that she might go. He caught her in his arms then.

But when the night came she remained at home. The next morning she awaited a scene with Glenn, but Glenn didn't appear. In the afternoon he phoned that he was going out of town. When he came next day he expressed only a perfunctory regret. The party had been ripping, Vida had excelled herself.

"People asked for you. We missed you, but of course you couldn't come if you were ill." She had invented a headache.

This was infinitely worse than an outright quarrel. The collectiveness of the "we missed you" stung her. Ah, she should have gone! Why had she caved over it? She did not hesitate at the big treachery; why this squeamishness over the petty deceits? Per-

haps it was her sense of honor, she told herself sardonically. But what was he saying now?

"You know 'Little Miss Muffett' opens Friday night, and I've brought two tickets, in case you care to go." He referred to the musical comedy in which his protégée, Pearl Primrose, was to have an important part. "I'm giving Pearl a little blow-out after the show, of course, but I'd like you to see her dance. Do you care for the tickets?"

Well, she was going to make no more blunders. She thanked him warmly and immediately invited Mrs. Deming, a woman he liked particularly, over the phone.

Floating and whirling about the rose-lighted stage, Pearl Primrose gave the effect of a nymph. Through the glasses Julia admired her delicate body, her pretty face, in which were mingled wildness and sadness, and the exquisite poetry of her dancing. Mrs. Deming was in raptures.

When the lights went up after the first act, the first persons Julia saw were Vida Mallard and Catherine Royds and Dale Winters in an opposite box.

It took her breath away.

Vida saw her looking and fluttered her fan, but the usual friendly glow was lacking, and Julia respected her for that dignity of reserve and for the rebuke it implied, although in her own heart there was no fondness left, and now, all at once, no regret. For in a flash she comprehended that she was jealous of Vida.

It was an unpremeditated duel. Julia was at her best—she had taken care to be so—in order to redeem herself in her lover's eyes. But was her best any better than Vida's? It seemed incredible that the woman over there was Vida Mallard, the portrait painter. The audience found her at least as fascinating as Julia, and as many visi-

tors dropped into that box as into this. Even Catherine Royds was not more animated. Only Dale looked solemn—solemnest, indeed, when he smiled.

Watching her, Julia hated her for her beauty, for her unsuspected power to charm, and for her sheer gameness in attending thus openly the show in which her husband's accredited protégée was one of the stars.

Then Glenn entered his wife's box. Of course, he instantly started one of his flirtations with Catherine Royds, but his arm was over his wife's chair back, and more than once Julia saw his hand rest in unconscious fondness on her shoulder.

"Is he not coming to me?" she wondered savagely, although she was laughing and talking with two or three men at the time. But presently he did come, much excited by the success of the dancer, as he whispered to Julia.

"If you could only be at the supper afterward!" he managed to whisper, squeezing her hand.

"She dances divinely, but I don't find her half as attractive as your wife," she said.

He flushed.

"Yes, isn't Vida great?" And Julia saw in his confusion the confirmation of her fears.

"I'm wearing my green dress—have you observed?" she asked.

"Surely I observed. I never saw you look so beautiful," he answered. "Don't you see enslavement in my gaze?"

She laughed softly. It was just what she did not see.

And after the show they could not meet; he was tied up with his party for the dancer.

Then the lights went down.

After the first scene of the next act Mrs. Deming, to Julia's enormous relief, pleaded a headache. Pearl Primrose would not appear again, and somehow the show had spent itself and



was driving on toward its inevitably tiresome and artificial end. They left.

The next day, to her own fury, Julia was threatened with a return of the malady which sometimes afflicted her, and her doctor insisted on her going South for at least a month.

She began to pack, telling no one but Glenn, who came to her from his office.

"You do look fagged, Julia. You need a rest, you know."

"But I hate Hot Springs. Perhaps you will come down?"

"Yes, maybe I can. Business is pretty tangled, though. Still, maybe I *can* run down." And he kissed her, but his zeal had a tinge of the perfunctory.

Julia sent a note to Vida, beginning "Dearest Vida," in which she excused herself from a personal farewell on the grounds of hurry. She left that night.

Arrived at Hot Springs, two weeks passed, and Glenn had not yet come. He had written infrequently, pleading business pressure. Incidentally, he had mentioned the failure of the musical comedy.

Vida had sent one brief note. She expressed a sincere desire for Julia's return to health, and said she had taken up her painting again. However, a New York paper reported a party she had given, at which, to Julia's amazement, Pearl Primrose had danced, "costume and setting designed and executed by the hostess herself."

"It means but one thing. Vida feels that she has won her goal. She has attracted him to her again. She no longer fears a rival. I wonder if she ever really feared. And I, sure of my power over him, despising her pathetic little game—I have *let* her win! But the game isn't finished yet! No, not yet!"

She promptly sent Glenn a message of three words: "I am ill."

Then he came.

And the first half hour with him told her she had lost him.

He did not yet know it himself, and so he betrayed himself at every turn. He was overdemonstrative, even for him, but in fits and starts, with absent intervals, when he would look at her impatiently. He did not believe in her message now; he knew it was a ruse, although, to be sure, she looked ill enough. He overemphasized his business, was out of sorts with the place, the hotel, the food. Nor was he jealous of a young foreigner who was dangling after her. But, worst of all was his reluctance to speak of Vida, and, when he did so, his self-consciousness gave him away.

That decided her to put him to the test.

"Glenn, when I get back I'm going to tell Vida everything about you and me, so that she can set you free."

He was openly horrified.

"Oh, no, Julia! No, dear—not yet! That is, you see—it isn't the right time. Wait. You were right all along, when you used to urge me not to tell her, and—no, not just yet!" He covered her with kisses, while confused excuses tumbled from his lips. At last she said softly:

"Very well. As you wish, dearest." And to herself, "Fool, not knowing your mind from day to day! But I'm not one of your whims, I'm Julia Ord! Before you leave here——"

"Of what are you thinking, darling?" he cajoled.

"You mean of *whom* am I thinking. And who would it be?" And she twined herself around him.

He returned to New York next day. He did not know, when he left, that she was really ill.

Those days spent in a bedroom of a winter-resort hotel were the ghastliest of Julia's life. The bodily distress

meant nothing, bad as it was. The mental misery prostrated her.

She had meant to follow him back, and seeing herself beridden brought her to a point of savagery. Then came a conflict as to her course when she should return. To tell Vida appealed to her as a revenge. Yes, she would do that. "A fine husband! A man you can't trust even with your most intimate friend!" She hated him, too. Yes, she would sow discord between them. He thought she would keep still, but she would tell. Then a feeling of revulsion seized her. How horrible it was to have such a nature as hers! And how weak! Why should she not forget them both, and go on with her life as if they had never existed? But his picture would arise before her. She could feel again his caresses, hear his wonderful, irresistible voice. So it went, day by day, until she reached the limit of all feeling, and a listlessness followed which even the disappearance of her illness did not lighten.

Then one night came the beginning of her emergence. The young Frenchman who had paid her attentions told her the story of his sister, whose husband had been lost in the war. He told her, he said, because it was such a strange story, one she might use, because she had the sympathy. He had read a book of hers, which he likened in some of its aspects to the works of Turgenieff. This praise, the highest she could have desired, and the extremely touching narrative he had told her, roused her to the shamefulness of her self-centered brooding. She made up her mind to get well and return to New York and make a new start, with the past fifteen months wiped off the slate. At the end of another fortnight she was able to leave.

Now that she had made the resolution, she went to the other extreme, and the idea of atonement filled her thoughts. She could never start fresh

until she had confessed to Vida. She left out of account the distress it might cause Vida. She must exorcise the past. She would get back her old self! She would tell the *truth*!

#### IV.

On reaching New York, she had to go from the station to her publisher's. From there she took a bus to Washington Square.

Dale Winters was on the same bus. "Good heavens, Julia! You've really been ill?"

"Yes, but I'm all right now." With the scanty attention she was able to give him, she thought he looked pale and worn, and she realized that of the four months he was to spend in the States, three were already past. By now he must comprehend the hopelessness of her ever speaking that word for which he had said he would wait. He had waited. Did he still care? Did he still stand by his doctrine of natural courses?

She did not ask about Vida, and at Twenty-third Street he left the bus. Eleven short blocks now lay between her and the scene of her confession. At Fourteenth Street she found herself trembling when the bus was held up by a parade turning into the Avenue. But, as it lumbered past Thirteenth Street, she pushed the bell with a steady hand. She alighted calmly.

Down the westward block she saw the Mallard house with its window boxes and studio roof. She directed her steps toward it.

"Yes, Miss Ord," said Mamie, in answer to her ring, "she's in. She's workin', but I'm sure she'll be in to you."

Julia went up to the studio and knocked.

There was no answer, so she pushed open the door. Vida was not there and

she entered. The grate fire was crackling. There was a big canvas on the easel, but there was no model.

Not to look at the picture, but out of sheer restlessness, she went to the other side of the easel.

It was her own portrait.

Hers—but so changed, so transformed, as to wring from her a sharp cry, as if something had stabbed her to the heart.

Every baseness, every deceit and hypocrisy of which she had been guilty in all these months, looked out at her! A Julia Ord mercilessly and masterfully revealed in her true relationship to the woman who had painted the picture. And in her lap, coiled in the ivory drapery, was a little green snake!

She gazed as if turned to stone.

Then something made her look up. Vida stood before her—Vida, in a soiled smock and draggly sandals, a smudge on her arm, and beads dangling, with the eyeshade over her head and brushes behind her ears.

"So—you hadn't guessed that I knew?" she asked calmly.

Julia sank down on the near-by couch, leaning her head against the cushions, her face turned away. She was literally numb.

"I didn't mean you to see this. No one else has." Vida spoke coldly, casually. She crossed to the hearth and threw into the fire the paper from a package she had been unwrapping.

There was a long silence.

"Are you going to exhibit it?" Julia asked at length.

"No. Of course not!"

"Of course not," Julia repeated dully. "I beg your pardon." And then, rising with difficulty, she added, "I—I will go now." She moved mechanically toward the door.

Vida's eyes, following her, lost some of their steeliness, and in more nearly her own voice she said:

"Wait. We may as well—there are

things we'd better say now, to show each other just where we stand."

"Is there anything to be shown, after—that?" And Julia glanced in loathing toward the portrait.

"Well, yes—certain things must be said—that is, I—and we'll not have another chance."

"That's true," Julia murmured.

"I knew," said Vida quietly, "long before you came to sit for your picture."

"You—you— And you asked me, knowing?"

"Why, yes, that was why I *did* ask you! I did it to keep from hating you. I thought—" She stopped and absently wiped the smudge from her arm. "At first I supposed you were fighting against your infatuation, and I certainly never thought of hating you then, but when you went on with the affair, that was different! Oh, it was by accident, I assure you, that I first discovered it! One day I surprised you both—you never knew—and after that it was easy enough to see through it all, especially through him. You were adroit, I admit."

Julia pressed her lips together.

"I suppose I was—"

"But, as I say, you went on with it, and then I felt I was hating you. Well, we'd been such friends—I've loved you more than any other woman, I think—and I knew if I painted you, if I flung myself into a good piece of work, into painting *you*— And it was so! The hate all sublimated into that picture you knew, for it was a good picture, if you remember?"

Julia moistened her lips.

"Yes, I remember."

"And we had those long talks, and all the things I had believed in you, I found them, and painted them; and I thought: 'She will put down this infatuation or, if she can't, she will tell me.' Everything would have been all right if you had told me. Although

even then I should have tried to show you that it wasn't real love, either his or yours. That was why I was glad Dale Winters had come back. I had believed that you and he—but of course I was mistaken. But the other, if you could have convinced me it was real love, I would have given him up. But you were silent. You worked secretly. And then, when I tried to make you tell, when I said I was going to win him back from the dancer, you let me, as you thought, fight in the dark, against a fictitious rival. And then, Julia, I let my hate come! And, when you sent for him to join you in the South—I painted *this*."

She went to the picture, her sandals making an incongruous shuffle on the bare floor.

"It's strange," she went on somberly, "how little altering it needed—a touch here, another there, and the snake in your lap—the little green snake!"

Julia stood like a statue.

"But this is what I want to say, Julia. I don't hate you now. Somehow, the hate—well, it's gone. And I brought out the picture this morning to destroy it. Yes, excellent work as it is. It is excellent! I know that. But I shall destroy it. And there is another thing I've lost. I've lost my love for Glenn."

At that, Julia looked at her.

"Yes. I'm going to divorce him."

"Divorce! When you have got him back?"

"Why do you think I have got him back? Because you have lost him? No, Julia, it isn't I who have won him. It is—Pearl Primrose."

They stood and gazed at each other.

"And—and when you divorce him?"

Julia asked softly.

"They are to be married."

Julia sprang to her feet. Rage, scorn, and then despair, passed over her face. She laughed harshly. She was as white as chalk.

"I—I oughtn't to have told you, Julia. It's his affair, not mine, and, indeed, I hadn't intended to. I had wanted you to grope in the dark, as you thought I had done. But all that—oh, what's the use? I want to forget it all now, and come back to my work. Nothing really matters but one's work," she said as if to herself. There was a deep silence. Suddenly she moved toward Julia, and said almost gently: "Don't regret him. He isn't worth it. In morals he's only a child. He cheats and lies as children do, to get what they want. He has charm, magnetism, generosity, but he hasn't character. He isn't a crook, he's a Peter Pan."

Julia said nothing.

"As for the dancer, she's another Peter Pan. They'll play together forever and be happy and suited. She's his mate. I'm glad he's found his real mate. Dale Winters is right. Let love take its natural course—but be sure its real love. And my real love now is my painting. Yours—" And she broke off with a gesture.

"And when—when did you find out it was she?"

"A few days ago. He told me. But don't expect him to tell you. He knew I'd release him; he may fear a scene with you."

"Vida," Julia said coldly and evenly, "I can't expect you to believe me, but I had come here this morning to tell you the—about him and me. Why should you believe me? You can't. And yet, it is the truth."

Vida's eyes lighted.

"If you say it, I do believe you. It isn't your real nature to deceive, to cheat. I'm glad you told me that, Julia. I'm glad."

Julia made a vague sign and went to the door. She passed out without a word. But she had seen her love for Glenn for what it was.

Two weeks later Vida was granted her divorce.

## V.

It was an April morning. Julia was at breakfast, pale and thin, but trying to be ambitious for her work. But her mind wouldn't concentrate, and presently it was dwelling on the fact that to-morrow Dale Winters was to return to Peru. He had been delayed a month.

She had seen him but once since that day on the bus, and that was a week ago. He still seemed pale and worried, and he had practically bidden her farewell, doubting whether he would have an opportunity to see her again.

In what mood was he going—he, who had called it silly and uncreative to love where love was not returned? Had he been able to practice his doctrine? Why, then, was he unhappy on the eve of the return to the work he loved?

Assuming that he still cared and that she could accept him, would it not be a congenial companionship? Passionate love she could not give him; she was through with that, she felt; but comradeship—yes, she could travel with him and she could do her own work while he did his. His loyalty of the past seven years touched her. If she could respond in a way he would accept, it might be her best self responding. And he would take her away, and she could work again.

Ever to work again!

She might send for him now. She might tell him the whole truth, and if he still wanted her—

She sent a messenger with a note. He came in response to it. His face, solemnly questioning, but with an inner radiance, reassured her.

"Dale," she said, flushing, "do you still care for me?" The change on his face brought her to her feet, it showed such astonishment, such consternation. And he had crimsoned to the roots of his hair.

"What is it?" she demanded. But she needed no answer; his distressed silence told her all. She summoned her faculties.

"Dale—oh, don't be embarrassed! It's I who should be that, because I was going to make use of you. I see it now, and how selfish I was. Oh, I don't say it cattily—it was just selfishness. If you had still cared, I'd have gone with you, to get away from myself. That was what I wanted. But you don't care, and you've been spared. I only wish it were some one else—I mean, that you loved some one else—for I could get back a little self-respect in just being glad for your happiness!"

He came toward her, his face lighting.

"Yes, and she'll not mind, although it's still a secret—but it's Vida."

"Vida!"

"Yes. It's all happened so quickly—that is, with her. It began three months ago with me. Even when she got her divorce, I couldn't believe she'd— But it has all happened, nevertheless. She told me yesterday. And when I return in the fall we shall be married."

"Julia, did you see *The Star*?"

"No. Why?" Still pale and thin, Julia had stopped her writing to make tea for Catherine Royds. It was a Sunday afternoon.

"Then you haven't seen the reproduction of your portrait?"

"My—*portrait*?"

"Yes, Vida's. Why, what's the matter?"

"Vida's portrait—of me! My God!"

"What do you mean? You know how marvelous it is. See, here's the reproduction. A very decent one, really." Catherine turned to the supplement and showed the photogravure.

Julia took it and saw her own likeness gazing out at her, but not as she had seen it last. No, as it had been originally, but with new beauty, deeper



character, with the marks of suffering and conquest, and with purpose reborn.

The critics raved over it in their own terms of composition, color, technique. They called it *the picture of the exhibit*.

"Let's run up to the Academy. My car will be here by the time you dress," Catherine urged.

Later in the day, walking back down the Avenue, alone, Julia felt the glory of the full spring and saw it in the old Square, full of life and growth, the loves of nesting birds, about to bring forth their little broods, their young.

"Oh, Vida," she whispered, trembling, "you have given me spring! You have given me back my *work*!"



## PLAINT

*From the Roumanian of Mihail Eminescu.*

**F**OREST dear, why tremulous,  
Why your foliage stooped so low  
Though no wind nor rain nor snow?

Must I not be tremulous  
If my times grow dolorous?  
Noon declining, night still gaining,  
Lo! my blossoms, sinking, waning;  
Winds beat all my growth astray,  
Drive the chanting birds away,  
Blow unwearyingly at me—  
Winters come and summers flee.  
Must I not be stooped in bloom  
When my birds seek gayer bloom?  
Over peaks of dreary foliage  
Flocks of swallows pass in voyage,  
Take my memory's array  
And my happiness away.  
And they pass in endless flow,  
Clothe the sky in somber glow;  
And they pass like timely things,  
Beating cadence with their wings;  
And they leave me desolate,  
Destitute, and desiccate.  
And I'm left with but my gloom  
To console me in my doom.

A. MIRCEA EMPERLE

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# More Super-Women

By Anice Terhune

Vlasta:

Last of the Amazons.

Nay, never ask this week, fair lord,  
Where they are gone, not yet this year,  
Except with this for an overword—  
But where are the snows of yesteryear?  
—*Ballad of Dead Ladies.*

**S**HE was a clean-limbed, snowy-skinned, flaming-haired giantess, glorious in beauty. Her super-woman lure was masked, but never completely hidden, under a veritable Napoleonic genius. She was one of the most dramatically picturesque figures in all history. Here is her strange story:

The Princess Libussa of Bohemia was an eccentric old sovereign, and one of the world's first "new women." Her maid of honor and adored protégée was the flaming-haired young giantess, Vlasta.

From childhood, Vlasta was under the old princess' protection and tuition. At an age when most girls are content to play with dolls, Vlasta was absorbing the rudiments of statecraft. Especially was she learning Libussa's amazingly advanced ideas on the superiority of woman over man.

These latter precepts burned themselves into the girl's soul, where, presently, still more radical ideas on the subject were born. The old princess was content to preach such theories. Vlasta vowed that she would practice them. You shall see, soon, how she kept her oath.

From a lanky, red-headed, angular brat, the super-woman blossomed into glorious young maidenhood. She made every one in Libussa's queer court her worshiping slave. The fame of her beauty and wit and elusive charm traveled far and fast. It reached the royal ears of Przemyslas, Grand Duke of Bohemia, mightiest potentate of Central Europe.

Przemyslas seldom visited Libussa's court. Nor did he encourage this vassal princess of his realm to pay state visits to his own palace. Libussa's eccentricities bored him. Her theories on women's rights sickened and scandalized him. But, as there seemed no earthly possibility that she could ever put any of these theories into practice, he did nothing to check her feminist preachments. He took mighty good care, however, to keep well out of earshot of them.

Now, Przemyslas stood in need of a wife, to replace the mouselike helpmeet whom his arrogance and infidelities had jostled into an early grave. Moreover, he was a beauty fancier, and ever anxious to add to his collection. Wherefore, after hearing a few dozen ecstatic tales of Vlasta's loveliness, the archduke found a pretext to visit his loyal, if boring vassal, the Princess Libussa.

The moment he set eyes on the red-

haired Vlasta, he knew his trip had not been in vain. The girl dazzled him, and in lordly style he deigned to make a proposition to her. Her answer proved to him that the flame in her hair was but a pallid and colorless thing, compared to the flame in her temper.

In far less lordly fashion—indeed, with an unwonted ardor of soul—he changed the light-o'-love proposition into a formal proposal. In other words, the all-powerful Przemyslas, Archduke of Bohemia, humbly besought Vlasta's snowy, shapely hand in marriage.

Old Princess Libussa was dizzy with happiness. Her blatant babble of man's vast inferiority to woman was not proof against an archduke's proposal for her maid of honor's hand. Przemyslas himself considered he had done a very handsome thing. But Vlasta could not see it that way. She had loved but one man in all her golden young life. And that man, alone of all the world, had flouted her love. His very name is forgotten, as are the details of the affair. But the effect on Vlasta was to be remembered for centuries, throughout Europe. Never again did the golden girl let herself care for any man. Never again did she let pass an opportunity for wreaking punishment on all men, for the pain and shame one man had inflicted upon her. And, when Przemyslas made his proposal in due form, Libussa threw fits of joyful gratitude, but Vlasta said: "No!"

Not content with saying no—and horrifying alike the incredulous archduke and the weepingly protesting Libussa—the girl proceeded to give a brief word picture of Przemyslas, and added the fervent opinion that no one who was not blind or insane could bring herself to marry such a creature as he.

The archduke, as soon as he could train his arrested powers of speech into anything more coherent than bellowed blasphemy, commanded the trembling

Libussa to throw her sacrilegious maid of honor into prison as punishment for such a ghastly display of treasonable language. Then, in a squirming rage, he departed homeward.

Libussa was far too fond of Vlasta and far too much under her influence to obey the overlord's mandate of imprisonment. Instead, she gave the unpenitent Vlasta a long lecture on marriage and on ambition and on the folly of angering an archduke. Vlasta listened with a tolerant smile. And, for a time, the incident seemed to be at an end. But only for a time, as you shall see.

Urged thereto by Vlasta, the princess decided to form a palace body-guard made up entirely of young girls—a veritable amazon guard. These girls were all of noble birth and were chosen for their physical strength and beauty, as well as for their powers of endurance. The princess was permitted to think this unique idea all her own. But it was Vlasta's. For more than a year, Vlasta had been recruiting and drilling this amazon guard. Now—with herself as its leader—she turned the complete regiment over to Libussa.

Vlasta complimented the bewildered princess on the cleverness of the scheme and on the excellence of her choice in picking out such perfect specimens of athletic young womanhood. She assured Libussa that the amazon guard would be glad to die for the protection of its dear sovereign.

But it was Libussa, and not her guard, who did the dying. A few weeks after the female regiment was enrolled as official palace guard, this aged princess died. This was early in 735 A. D. Promptly Libussa's next of kin, a rather worthless Bohemian princeling, prepared to assume the rulership of the little principality. But Vlasta had other plans.

Says Michaud:

"These young attendants, distin-

guished by their strength and by their address in military affairs, to whom Libussa had confided the safety of her person, were still under the leadership of Vlasta. She assembled them, after the death of her princess, upon the summit of Mount Vidowlé, and there she incited them to take up arms against authority and at her command."

The move was not sudden. Vlasta had planned it for many months. As crafty as she was daring, she had laid out every move in the campaign. Her regiment of girl athletes were completely under her sway. She had taught them her fiery creed of feminine superiority. Now she was volunteering to show them how they could profit by her teachings. And, to the last recruit, they followed her.

It must be borne in mind that this was in the eighth century and in "Mitteleuropa;" in an age of darkness, of heathendom, of gross brutality—even, in some European regions, of cannibalism. Another half century was to elapse before Charlemagne should conquer and christianize and civilize the bulk of the continent.

Women in Bohemia were treated more like beasts of burden than like humans. Their lot was the lot of the bondslave. Small wonder that the prospect of release drove Vlasta's amazons to a frenzy of zeal and of loyalty to the beautiful girl who promised to show them the way to such liberty and superiority!

There, on the top of Mount Vidowlé, the super-woman turned her regiment of amazon guards into the nucleus and striking arms of a red-hot revolution. While the bulk of the regiment held the mountain against all comers, certain silver-tongued apostles were sent forth to preach Vlasta's fierce feminist doctrines throughout the country.

The response amazed even the optimistic Vlasta. Never did the hilltop fiery cross awaken such swift and war-

like response among the highland clans as did this preaching of woman's superiority among the downtrodden damsels of Bohemia.

Women of all ages flocked by thousands to Mount Vidowlé. The training camps buzzed with martial preparation. In an unbelievably short time, Vlasta's single amazon regiment had swelled to an amazon army. It was no comic-opera army, either. It proved its tremendous efficacy as a fighting machine. It was a well-drilled throng of fanatics, preferring death to their old-time serfdom, and trusting implicitly to the inspiration of their new-found priestess of freedom.

For many centuries bullfighting has been the supreme sport of Spanish countries. One never hears of cow-fights. Ancient *plaza del toro* records explain why. According to old-time students of such lore, an enraged cow is thrice as formidable and murderous an opponent as is a bull. No matador has the courage to face her. The odds against him are too great. This side light on the fierceness, in combat, of the so-called weaker sex may account for the extreme prowess of Vlasta's army.

The princeling, whose succession to Libussa's throne was thus challenged by Vlasta, decided to put down the ridiculous and improper uprising with an iron hand. He marshaled his troops and prepared to move in force upon Mount Vidowlé. But Vlasta did not give him a chance to attack. Almost at the outset of his march, she and her amazons fell upon him in a night assault. His army was cut to ribbons, and the princeling himself was slain.

His next-door neighbor, a more powerful prince, protested against this onslaught. Vlasta replied to the protest by invading his country, at the head of her amazons, and carrying slaughter and defeat from one end of it to the other.

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Having proved her warring ability, she marched back to Mount Vidowlé and their built a fortified city, which, modestly, she named in her own honor. This city, she declared, should be the hub and center of a vast new empire—an empire ruled by her and administered by women alone.

"Those who had deemed her mad," says a chronicler, "now were so assured of her power to conquer all, that all women to whom the tidings of her victories were brought abandoned husband and home and child and fled to her, so that in a year or less, she was overset with volunteers, and might choose from among them as she willed, for her army and for the peaceful arts."

Our old friend, Przemyslas, learned of the atrocious deeds wrought by his former inamorata. At first, he could not credit them. But the deaths of two of his subsidiary princelings, and the annexing of their respective territories to Vlasta's "empire," finally roused him to belief and to fury.

He sent to Vlasta one of the nobles of his court, as ambassador extraordinary, bearing a long and high-flown and haughty message to the amazon queen, bidding her lay down her arms, to disperse her army, and to accompany the message's bearer to the archducal presence, for condign punishment.

As a stroke of shrewdness, Przemyslas picked out for this mission the handsomest and most fascinating man in his court, a man with a record as an inspired woman tamer; which was rather a waste of good material, both in message and in messenger, for the message was never delivered, and the messenger ceased, at the same time, to be the handsomest man in Bohemia.

He was led into Vlasta's presence. She sat on her new-made throne in the midst of her half-naked amazon bodyguard. Before he could speak the

first syllable of his errand, she made a sign to four strapping women who had conducted him to the throne room, and this gentle quartet seized and bound the unprepared victim, and laid him at Vlasta's feet. Then, with more skill than humanity, they cut off his nose and his lips and the tip of his chin. Upon his broad white forehead they branded with hot iron an unspeakable word. Also, they cut the "Achilles tendon" of each of his ankles. After which, hoisting him to the back of a mangy donkey, they sent him on his way.

Przemyslas, raving at the disgraceful treatment of his favorite, sent in haste a punitive expedition against Mount Vidowlé. This expedition was not only beaten, but annihilated. The amazons had made a terrible beginning.

"Their excesses," writes Michaud, "were soon proclaimed throughout Europe, and women from all neighboring lands crowded to Vlasta's standard. She built, now, another and larger fortress, which she called 'Diewin,' and which was known as 'The Castle of Young Girls.' This stronghold became her headquarters. Thence, under her commands, the warrior women scourged the surrounding regions, conquering wherever they went. All who did not belong to their sex were slain or mutilated or enslaved."

Vlasta kept up her followers' zeal in several inspired ways. For instance, she distributed freely among them all the rich loot of the various expeditions, apportioning the richest prizes to the most reckless of her warriors. She placed in high office such women of wisdom and loyalty as were too old or too feeble to take the field, and in this way secured a meed of statesmanship and progress for her martial domains. She instituted "The Order of The Golden Necklace" as an incentive to heroism. Massive necklaces of chased gold and uncut gems were the award



for supreme courage; and these awards drove their seekers to prodigies of endeavor. Her code of laws stated emphatically that no man, under pain of death, should carry arms nor should ride horseback, "except seated sideways;" nor should he own property.

The warrior maids were permitted to choose their own husbands. These husbands were obliged by law to "drive the plow, ply the loom, and tend the home," while their martial spouses fought the country's battles. By this same code of laws, an amazon might not only choose her own husband, but might put him aside at will and select another. Infidelity on the part of any of these luckless husbands was punishable by torture and subsequent death.

Such men as no amazons chanced to choose as husbands were either set to the most menial labor of the community or were put out of the way. When a new town or village or principality was conquered, its male inhabitants were either put to the sword or apportioned as husbands to such of the amazons as still chanced to be unmarried.

Little is said, in the various chronicles, concerning the statecraft of Vlasta's reign. But it is known that she fostered, in her own wild way, agriculture and commerce in her Vidowlé dominions and in the territory she annexed. This may account for her mad reign lasting as long as it did—this, and the pitiful eagerness of the central European women to secure for once a square deal.

In any event, Vlasta held her own, and more than held her own, for nearly ten years. One ruler after another sought to overthrow the amazon's power. Invariably, all expeditions sent forth to conquer the tribe were hurled back by her with terrific loss.

Przemyslas, above all others, hated her and sought for her destruction. His fellow potentates were merely indignant that a woman should have

usurped a throne and should have carried devastation to the neighboring lands. But Przemyslas had a heavier score to settle.

He had always before him the memory of his rejected love and of the fierce scorn with which Vlasta, in former days, had heaped insult upon his august sensibilities. This memory kept alive his chronic hatred for the superwoman. Her destruction became the one object of his life, the one aim to which he bent all his vengeful energies and all his realm's resources.

At last, in 744, he formed an alliance with several lesser princes and advanced into Vlasta's country with two powerful armies. At the head of one of these armies, he attacked Vidowlé and, by sheer force of numbers, carried the fortress by storm.

Not one of the warrior girls would surrender to his victorious troops; the beleaguered amazons fought on until the last of them was killed. In petty rage at the difficulty in overcoming a force so much smaller than his own, Przemyslas ordered the bodies of the slain maidens to be hacked to pieces. Then he marched to join his second army of invasion. For he learned, belatedly, that his life enemy, Vlasta, was at Diwin, and not at Vidowlé.

Meantime, the other of Przemyslas' two armies had advanced upon Diwin. In a bloody battle it had been routed by Vlasta, and hurled back toward Vidowlé.

Vlasta was preparing to march to Vidowlé's relief, when news came to her of the fortress' fall and of the garrison's terrible death. She hastened after the army she had already defeated and smote it again, capturing twenty-four nobles of high rank and bearing them back to Diwin.

"There," says Michaud, "to appease the shades of the amazons who had fallen at Vidowlé, she sacrificed upon the altar these prisoners of rank, ac-

companied the sacrifice with hideous tortures. She and her maidens flung themselves upon the unhappy victims and fairly drank their blood."

But Vlasta had wasted much precious time in this wild-beast orgy of vengeance, and meanwhile the beaten army had had a chance to join Przemyslas. The combined forces advanced upon Diewin and tried to take the fortress by storm.

Vlasta held the place against them and drove them back from the walls, but was too heavily outnumbered to make them raise the siege.

Przemyslas invested the fortress and prepared to starve out the defenders. Diewin was ill provisioned.

But it was not Vlasta's custom to sit with folded hands and let herself be attacked. Battle zest overcame prudence—or perhaps she realized that the result must be the same in any case,

and preferred to die fighting rather than famishing. She mustered her heroic women about her for the last time. At their head, she dashed forth in a desperate sortie against a force that outnumbered her own by eleven to one.

The battle was brief, but the amazons sold their lives dearly. Nor did one of them sue for quarter. They plowed their red way through the smothering ranks of the enemy, with Vlasta's flaming hair and sword-wielding white arm as their guidon, until the last one of them was dead or disabled.

Her devoted followers gone, her reign at an end, Vlasta finally stood at bay, hemmed in by her foes. She was bleeding from a dozen wounds. But even then she cheated capture and punishment. For, as a hundred hands were stretched forth to clutch her, she fell upon her sword and died.

Peace to her fiery, warrior soul!



### TROPIC RAIN

THE blue lagoon is a sudden gray,  
The big drops splash against the wall,  
And on the courtyard's yellow tiles  
One after one the almonds fall.

Rose and hibiscus droop in rags,  
The tallest palm sways in the breeze,  
And petals in sodden purple heaps  
Are piled about the china trees.

Then the gray lagoon turns sudden blue,  
The downpour stops, the wind is dead;  
And from an oleander trunk  
A coal-black lizard lifts its head.

MUNA LEE.



# "Sweets to the Sweet"

By Robert W. Sneddon

Author of "The Street of Lost Memories,"  
"Love and Lions," etc.

IF I am ever again tempted to give a married woman a present, may I be taken out to the nearest lamp-post and hung up by the heels to get my brains back into place," said Charlot savagely. "The devil knew what he was up to when he invented marriage."

I stared at my plump friend. His tone was enough to curdle the milk of human kindness.

"Yes, you may stare, my friend," he continued bitterly. "I have had dealings with editors, with music publishers, with theatrical managers, with actresses in search of a song or a play, but they are as lambs contrasted with that combination of monkey and tiger which masquerades as the average married woman of Paris."

"Heavens! What has happened?" I asked, as he continued to scowl at the unoffending pedestrians of the Boulevard du Montparnasse.

"Naturally, you will never comprehend. You are married yourself."

"Spare me your sighs and curb your envy," I remarked with a grin, "and confine yourself to telling me what has turned this day into a season of mourning."

"It was this way. What are you grinning at, owl? If I am a bachelor, it is my choice, believe me. You know the Bergers. Or anyway, you ought to if you don't. Berger is the manager

of the People's Theater, and he has a charming wife. Charming!" He gritted his teeth. "Bah! Monsieur Berger walks the chalk line very carefully when madame's eye is on. She rules the roost, as the saying is. Only that does not prevent Berger having a weakness for the chickens of his chorus. It is a little private vice of his to be more amiable to them and to his female stars than he should be. Naturally, madame also has her admirers.

"Well, it happened that I had a play which I thought should see the light of day, and I thought of Berger—or rather of Madame Berger. The old boy has a high opinion of her critical ability, or at least professes to have, and she reads all the scripts. If she says yes, then it is yes. So, one morning, bright and early, I carried myself and my masterpiece to Berger's apartment, and there I saw this arbiter of my fate. Trembling with anticipation, I surrendered my destiny to her charming hands. I must confess that they were very pretty hands. Yes, madame was undeniably cordial, and she made me very welcome. In fact, I came out imagining that perhaps, after all, I was a genius. Beware of women who implant such an idea in your cranium. It is the first step to proving to you very conclusively that you are the prince of fools, and if I may say so, of suckers.

"Berger was there, too, but he kept

in the background, where I fancy he resides most of the time he is at home. But even he was cordial and obliging. I came away thinking I had inbided the whole atmosphere of the household. I was wrong. The one thing, and most important of all, which had escaped my eagle eye, was that madame was fiendishly jealous of monsieur, that little withered piece of anatomy as he was, with all the airs of a juvenile lead. What put me off the scent was the fact that madame herself had suggested for the leading rôle in my play, which I had eloquently outlined to them, the name of Juliette Yvres. I knew from a friend of mine, Dartois, the comedian, that Berger was plaguing Juliette with his attentions. Dartois was Juliette's particular friend at that moment and had told me he was undecided whether to break his contract or Berger's jaw."

"This all sounds very complicated to me," I expostulated. "I don't see that you were anyway concerned with their affairs."

"You don't see? Well, that shows how much you know of writing for the stage," Charlot told me with a pitying look. "To write a play—pooh! a trifle—the work of a few evenings in the corner of a café! But to place it—ah, *that* is the trouble, my boy! Placing a play is neither a business nor an art; it is a conspiracy, a backstairs conspiracy. In your case you write a short story, you take it to an editor, he buys it, and *voilà*, your part is ended. But a play—*bon sang!* Who has to approve of it? Listen. The producer, the producer's wife, his secretary, his friends who drop in, sometimes his cook. If the cook laughs—good! he has a popular success. Then it must be approved of by the company, and the company's several relations, illicit or otherwise."

"Was it not Dumas who changed the act of a play because the fireman yawned at rehearsal? You must please

the fireman, the sceneshifters, the door-keeper, the prompter, the gentlemen in the box office. Not a word of the public yet. No! And having pleased all this noble army of martyrs to art, you are still as far away from production as ever, unless you find some gentleman with money and a passion for gambling. You have then to undermine his resolution by painting such a glowing picture of the opportunities attainable through the stage door, that he will falter and succumb. Even then the rascal may gamble on the stock exchange and the money he has promised verbally to you will vanish into thin air. Or some vampire may come along and do you out of your victim's cash. You must compel him by your eloquence to deposit the amount with your producer or to sign a written guarantee that he will hold himself responsible for the expenses of the show."

"Whom did you get on your fly paper then?"

"Darnac, the sugar broker. I lured him to the Bergers'. Berger talked, conjuring visions of wealth out of the air; madame flashed her magnetic eyes and displayed her pretty ankles so coquettishly, purring and pawing over poor Darnac, that he could scarcely wait till he got home to hand over forty thousand francs. Unfortunately, when he did get home, he sat down to reflect and, being a Norman, hard-headed and tight of purse, thought it better to wait a few days or so and see how the cat jumped."

"The cat?" I ejaculated.

"Madame. Can you imagine—she had hypnotized the poor fellow into thinking that he had made a conquest! You see, the war promoted Darnac from a grocery clerk to a heavily gold-plated profiteer. He deserved to lose his money. So you see, when he struck madame and her stage graces he felt he was a perfect devil. An actress about to fall into his lap, no less! Still,

when you come down to the bottom of the trouble you find Saron. That week I should have set fire to Saron's store."

"Talk about cats jumping!" I cried. "You jump about in your story like a cat with singed feet. Who is Saron and what had he to do with it?"

"Everything. But for him I should be taking a trip to America to see about my American rights. Yes, I believe that but for that cursed Saron I should be like Maeterlinck, traveling on a special train over the prairies and exhibiting myself at each stop to the wild cowboys who inhabit the interior of your continent."

"Quite so." I agreed. "I see you will probably write the great American play some day. But you haven't answered my question. Who in thunder is Saron?"

"Oh, come, come! You know Saron, the candy maker in the Avenue de l'Opera. He it was who furnished the candy which has poisoned my future, so to speak. You needn't look so scared. I am not doomed to die of poison. Have I not survived the last importation of American whisky?"

"Candy! How could a trifle like candy upset your plans?" I muttered, mystified.

"Trifle! Listen, and if you don't agree with me that I am the most unfortunate of men, I will eat my hat. The history begins on New Year's day."

"Ancient history by now, surely."

"I just had the last of it to-day. It had to come to me in slow confidence. Some of it was flung like a brick at my head. Here is the start. Saron had some business deals with Darnac and on New Year's morning sent him around a number of his best boxes of chocolates. Darnac thought that he might as well go and pay his respects to Madame Berger. Only he must take her a present. New Year, season of licensed robbery."

"I know. Tips to the concierge, the postman, the coal dealer, the newspaper seller—every blessed soul who has ever crossed your doorstep on an errand during the year."

"The nearest thing to a present that he had by him was one of those boxes of candy. However, he went to the Bergers', found madame alone, and passed on the candy. She took it very sweetly—although she did think Darnac might have dipped deeper into his pockets—and set it down with the twelve other boxes of candy she had already received. Darnac departed, enchanted with his progress, and madame went out to pay a call herself."

"Berger, to whom nobody had given anything but a Happy New Year, was in despair. He had no money and he wanted to give Juliette a little reminder of this season of love for our fellow mortals, especially of the other sex. He had been trying to borrow some cash and found nobody home, so he arrived home very much in the dumps. And then upon his startled vision burst the magnificent pile of candy boxes. He grabbed up the prettiest, being sure madame would never notice one gone out of the many, and hurried off to Juliette. Inside of it he placed a tender note in which he did not hesitate to express his passion for the fair actress."

"Many happy returns of the day," he said to her. "'Happy New Year. Here is a little offering from the most devoted of your admirers.'"

"Thanks, my dear Victor. What an expensive box!"

"Nothing is too expensive for my dear little Juliette," he said, smirking. "All I ask is that when you go to bed to-night you will open the box and think of me."

"'Old camel!' said the actress to herself—oh, I heard her story. 'When I go to bed I shall have other things to think of!' But aloud she assured him."

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"Surely, my friend. Put it down there with the others."

"You have others?"

"Oh, yes, yes. They have been arriving all morning. Now it breaks my heart, but you must trot along. I expect my hairdresser any minute."

"So off trotted Berger in the seventh heaven, having received a peck on the cheek from his beloved. He had scarcely gone when Dartois arrived, and not the hairdresser, as you may have guessed."

"That old fool makes me tired!" said Juliette, telling of her late visitor. "What a pest he is with his airs and grimaces! The idea of thinking I would eat his candy! If you love me, Raymond, take that box out with you and deposit it in the nearest garbage can. It makes the nineteenth I have received this morning, and the doctor has forbidden me to eat candy for a month. Heavens! You would think there were no other stores in Paris—the old skinflint! The sooner you and I, my lad, can kiss him good-by, the better. Is there no way of having a company of our own?"

"A nice way to be talking when my play was on the carpet! But they are all ungrateful, those comedy queens. I have met them and their kind for a good many years now."

"Dartois said au revoir at last and went off with the box. He was just about to deposit it in a convenient garbage can when it suddenly occurred to him that he had better not go back to his apartment without a present for the concierge. He had noticed her bowing and scraping as he went out, and he realized that if he returned empty-handed, his life would be made miserable. Letters would be lost, messenger boys sent away without seeing him, perhaps his apartment let over his head at the first failure to be on time with the rent. Oh, you can't afford to displease your janitress in

Paris, my boy! Decidedly, something had to be done, thought Dartois. All at once he had a brilliant idea. Under his arm was just the present required. Throw the box of candy into a garbage can? Not much! So delighted was he at the solution of his difficulties that he rushed off home. His concierge wasn't in her usual sentry box, so, scribbling a complimentary card with his name on it, he stuck it under the ribbon on the box, laid the box down in the lodge, and darted off into the street again, whistling happily.

"It was a short time after that I appeared at his concierge's lodge. Oh, fatal day!

"Is Monsieur Dartois in?" I asked.

"No, monsieur. I have just come down from his apartment—I clean it every week. He must have just gone. See what he has left for me—a box of candy—and last night I did not have a wink of sleep with toothache."

"What a shame!" I said. I am always polite to concierges. "But you can give that to some one as a present. You have a niece or a daughter, perhaps."

"She shook her head. 'No, monsieur. I have none. It is too bad. Such a pretty box! Whatever shall I do with it?'"

"Why not sell it?" I suggested.

"Who would buy such a thing?" she asked helplessly.

"Then I had one of those brilliant ideas with which I am cursed. I was on the way to make a diplomatic call. Why not buy this box? It had apparently never been untied. The ribbon was fresh and uncreased."

"I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give you ten francs for it."

"The old girl jumped at my offer and the box was mine. So off I galloped to Madame Berger's, and when I got there I handed over my box and made a flowery speech. You see, the contract had not been signed yet. Madame



thanked me most politely, but it seemed to me that the box made no great impression on her, for she never looked at it, although she held it on her lap. We chinned a bit about the play and how beautiful the prospect of its going on was. So much was my imagination roused that I almost fancied I could feel the royalties in my pocket.

"Just then Berger came in, beaming and smirking as usual, and we discussed the gossip of the day—the theatrical news, of course. Suddenly, as everything seemed to be swimming along beautifully, I caught a glimpse of Berger's face. He was staring at the box of candy on madame's lap, and his little eyes looked as if they were about to pop out of his head. He was wriggling about in his chair and moving his lips as if he wanted to speak and couldn't. I was in the dark absolutely as to what was wrong with him. I thought he was in for a fit of some sort. All at once madame, looking up, caught him grimacing and grew alarmed.

"What is the matter? Aren't you feeling well, my angel?"

"My angel! That was the very phrase.

"Don't you—don't you find the room a trifle warm?" he faltered, making some sort of sign to me.

"I thought he had suddenly gone crazy.

"Warm!" cried madame. "I am perishing of cold. Did you get your feet wet? Did you forget to put on your rubbers?"

"Yes," he mumbled. "Yes, my love. But there's nothing wrong with me. A glass of water and I'll be all right."

"She rose to her feet. His face brightened as she went to the door, then fell as she stopped at the sideboard and filled a glass of water from the jug on it.

"I was sitting beside madame's chair where she had set down my present.

All at once I caught the meaning of Berger's signals. He wanted a chocolate.

"You permit me, madame?" I said politely. "May I offer monsieur one of your chocolates?"

"Ass!" hissed Berger with a malignant glare.

"I beg your pardon," I gasped. "Did I understand you to say—ass?"

"Madame came back with the glass of water in time to catch my remark, and she stood gaping down at us.

"What is this? On New Year's Day? You are surely not quarreling, great children! Shake hands. The moment I turn my back you can find nothing better to do than to fight."

"Oh, madame, such an idea never entered my head!" I protested.

"Nor mine," Berger chimed in, grinning miserably. "I was merely clearing my throat—hoarsely, like this."

"But it sounds exactly as if you were saying—ass," said madame perplexedly. "Still, I know you are both good friends. Come, you shall each have a chocolate."

"On second consideration—no! I think I'd better not," Berger said nervously, "no, perhaps better not—before dinner, you know."

"Nonsense! Don't change your mind like a weathercock, Victor. Besides, you will offend our dear Charlot who has just presented them to me."

"Oh, Charlot!" His face lit up. "Then, in that case, I must certainly have a chocolate."

"Madame picked up the box again. Then, just about to open it, she paused in amazement and examined it.

"This is a coincidence," she said. "Darnac gave me a box identical with this one this very morning. Did you see it, Victor?"

"I? My dear! Why, no! I don't think I did. I've had so much to think of to-day. Where did you leave it?"

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"Over there with the others. I must look and see."

"Come, my dear," Berger interposed hastily. "Later on. Charlot must be impatient to taste Monsieur Saron's wares."

"Saron! How did you happen to know this was one of Saron's?"

"Pshaw! You would know his boxes anywhere. He must have an enormous sale at this time. You got yours at his store, I presume, my dear friend?"

"Well, I wasn't going to say I had got it from Dartois' concierge, so I said I had."

"Well, now that's settled," said Berger quite cheerfully. "Now for our candy."

"Madame opened the box and folded back the tissue paper. All at once she started and drew out a note. A cold sweat broke out over me. Why on earth hadn't I looked in the box? Heaven only knew what Dartois had said to his concierge!

"What's that?" said Berger, giving me a nasty look. "A note? That's curious, my dear Charlot. So that is why you weren't anxious to have my wife open the box in front of me?"

"At that moment I could have cheerfully strangled the old fool. The idea of my sending notes to Madame Berger and risking getting into trouble with Darnac.

"Why, this is strange!" said madame. "This note is not from Charlot. It's in your handwriting, Victor."

"That floored Berger. He nearly fell off his chair; then, recovering himself, he shot over a venomous glance.

"I assure you I know nothing of this," I apologized. "How on earth could it have got in there, I wonder."

"I wonder," echoed madame, pursing up her lips. "Stay where you are, Victor. Don't you dare to leave the room till we have solved this mystery. Listen to this pretty piece of writing:

'Juliette, beloved of my dreams. This tender token from thy adoring Victor.' Bah! It is sickening."

"You unscrupulous forger!" cried Berger loudly, winking at me in the most confidential way. "So you thought you could play such a joke on me! You seem to forget, my dear fellow, that this is not the first of April. But you can't put it over on us. We are too devoted a couple, my boy, to be upset by nonsense of this kind!"

"Oh, shut up, Victor!" said madame roughly. "Don't be a fool! Now, young man, since this villain has never told the truth in his life, perhaps you can explain this."

"I'm sorry that I can't."

"But you must know something about this! I shall ring up Saron and give him a piece of my mind. Still, that would not tell me how this note came to be there. Heavens! It is hard for a woman to have to deal with men. Tell me honestly where you got this?"

"Well, I was in a quandary then. To pocket my pride and tell the truth, or to hold to what I had already said. I made up my mind. My friend of the two before me was undoubtedly madame, and my destinies lay in her hands, after all.

"I will be honest, madame," I confessed at last. "I bought the box from Dartois' concierge. It was his Christmas gift to her, and the poor soul had toothache. You must ask Dartois about the note."

"Dartois—ah!" cried Berger, jumping from his seat, his little face black with fury.

"Sit down, you!" madame commanded. "You'll speak when you're spoken to and not until then! I am talking to your friend here."

"Your friend, madame," I interjected.

This didn't help matters any, I could see. Berger shook his fist at me and I

knew he was through with me. Madame tightened her lips.

"So you got this from Dartois?" said she. "Then we must see Dartois."

"She stood there wrinkling up her brows. Victor, her dear Victor, was scowling at me, and I felt my knees knock together. What a mess I had got myself into!

"All at once madame let out a loud, triumphant 'Ah!' I almost toppled over.

"Ah! And Dartois got it from Juliette." She ran to the table and feverishly counted the boxes on it, examining them one by one in comparison with the one I had presented to her. Then she turned upon Berger.

"My box is gone. You took it and gave it to Juliette, miserable worm, monster that you are! You took Monsieur Darnac's gift to me and presented it to that trollop. Very good, little man! I know how to handle you. You do not stir out of this house for a week, and I'll see that my lady gets her walking papers—she and the elegant Dartois."

"But my play!" I cried in agony. "I thought they were to start rehearsing it right away."

"Your play?" said madame in a withering tone. "Be off with you, you song lizard! Be off with you and never dare to show your face here again!"

"I grabbed up my hat and the script which she ran to get and threw at my

feet, and, as I closed the door behind me, I heard Berger's voice:

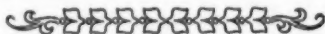
"For the love of Heaven! Not the dog whip! Ouch!"

"But, Darnac?" I asked Charlot, as he subsided and looked desperately into his empty glass, a hint which I was quick to take. "Surely he wasn't drawn into the fight?"

"Wasn't he? Berger insulted him as near to the dueling point as he dared, just to spite madame. Then Darnac took out his spleen on me. In fact, my dear fellow, I was blamed for the whole affair. Dartois thinks I staged the whole business. He doesn't speak to me now. You see, he and Juliette got their dismissal from the company. There was only one person who seems to have come out of this mess with any credit at all."

"Who? Oh, I can guess—the concierge."

"Nonsense! Nonsense! No, Juliette. Darnac is backing her, and they say she has had forty thousand francs from him as a start. My forty thousand francs, you can see that. As for me," concluded Charlot solemnly, "if you know any one who wants a perfectly good play, put me on the trail. Only no women, please. If there is any petticoat in the deal, nothing doing! If business cannot be done without the naked truth, at least see that it wears a pair of pants."



## TO KATHLEEN

STILL must the poet, as of old,  
In barren attic, bleak and cold,  
Starve, freeze, and fashion verses to  
Such things as flowers and song and you;

Still as of old his being give  
In Beauty's name, while she may live,  
Beauty that may not die as long  
As there are flowers and you and song.

EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY.



# Philanderer's Progress

By Paul Hervey Fox

Author of "The Stone Serpent," etc.

## III.—Kathleen

**A**MONG all the memories which Steven Trayle was to retain from the period of his philandering, none was more vivid than the pert and impudent face of the little blond girl who called herself Kathleen Joyce. Chance provided their encounter, and chance permitted their intimacy to ripen in a passing episode.

If you can picture a man of thirty-six, with reflective eyes and a sentimental humor, setting out naively, deliberately, in search of love, and laughing at himself for doing so, you can picture Steven Trayle. His life had flowed in peaceful channels; he had bartered reality for the dreams of familiar books; and he had awakened in the end to regard with disgust the mild and placid years behind him. Love, the high adventure, he had never truly known; and, with a sudden resolve, he sold out his quiet business to take up the career of an errant bachelor, expectant of romance.

Twice he had followed a false gleam, and now, with the approach of summer, he found his leisure dispiriting. With idle hands he welcomed deviltry, but Satan, who finds some mischief still, appeared to be sleeping.

However, all at once, Mrs. Gunn went away.

Mrs. Gunn was Steven's housekeeper, a legacy from an aunt. She terrorized him effectively, ordered his habits, and carried herself with an aggrieved air. He bore it all with hu-

mility and patience, as men sometimes will. Mrs. Gunn, with her high cheek bones and wisp of thin, dark hair, had boxed his ears as a child, and he was half inclined to think she would do so again if it struck her as necessary. In a rasping monotone she frequently referred to all that she had done for him, and never omitted a muttered threat of leaving forever.

"All these years I've been working, cooking, cleaning, and merciful heavens knows what else besides! Ah, and there's many 'ud appreciate the sacrifices I've made! Me, working myself to skin and bone—and maybe I won't be here for long, neither! I'm nobody's fool, and that's the blessed truth!"

Steven accepted these recriminations with calmness; they were merely counters, of no more significance than breathing; and the crotchety old woman was, surely, an admirable cook, and kept the ancient, brown house on Madison Avenue bright and homy. And in the end he grew to have a shadowy belief that he had, after all, done her some dim injustice and was greatly in her debt. One day she appeared with an announcement which, on her lips, seemed extraordinary.

"I'm thinking of a vacation after all this time. Mrs. Biggles is wanting for me to stay in her elegant bungalow at Rockaway Beach for a week, or maybe more. I'm thinking of going, if you've no reasonable objections."

She threw a superb mockery into her final sentence, and her small eyes shone upon him, inviting combat.

"By all means! Enjoy yourself. I shall get on quite well."

"And it's he who wants me to go!" exclaimed Mrs. Gunn, referring to Steven as if he had not been present. "There's many that would show more gratitude to a dog!"

"Not at all," protested Steven feebly. "Naturally, I would prefer to have you stay, but——"

"Ho!" cried Mrs. Gunn in a shrill voice. "Then he tries to prevent me from going! That's the way he talks, is it? And me, only wanting a little pleasure, and Mrs. Biggles' brother so attentive."

Steven stared. He remembered soberly believing, as a boy, that Mrs. Gunn was even then upward of eighty; and here she was, betraying amorous interests. Mrs. Gunn and love! It was grotesque!

She departed the next morning, grumbling and dour. This was on a Wednesday. On Thursday a thunderstorm broke over town, and a lively wind raced through the streets in gusts. Steven dined morosely at his one, staid club, and drove home directly afterward in a cab.

He had a sense of depression, induced, in part, by the malevolence of the weather; and he fled up the steps of his house through a beating rain and stumbled into the vestibule. It was blue-black here, and as he fumbled with his key, his hands struck something soft, firm, and warm. A stir of perfume, so strong that he was astonished he had not noticed it at once, hung in the damp airs, but there was no sound, nor any word. Steven struck a match, and it flickered and went out as his hand gave a jerk of surprise.

By that tiny flame he had descried an oval face under a battered little hat.

Blue eyes had gazed at him with wondering candor; the whole figure was alert, but mysteriously silent. It was like a patch out of a melodrama, and the low, formidable sounds of the storm outside gave it an appropriate background.

"Hullo!" said Steven. "What's the trouble? Suppose you—suppose you come inside."

The lights in the dark, handsome library revealed a pretty waif in a limp and bedraggled costume. Her cheeks were ruddled with paint, her pale-yellow hair was in a sad tangle, but the attention she directed upon Steven and the furnishings of the somber old room was appallingly innocent. The next moment she smiled, and the little face went into lines of sharp, unpleasant wisdom. It was a bewildering transition.

Steven struck up a careless whistle and, stooping, set alight the wood fire that was laid in the grate. The house held a damp chill.

"Are you hungry?" he asked. "Would you like something to eat?"

"Well," she drawled, "I could do with a bit o' champagne and truffles."

He regarded her quizzically, and the glance she gave in return was impertinent and fetching. He came back from the pantry with the remains of a cold chicken, a bowl of crackers, and a goblet of milk. She ate noisily, cramming the food into her mouth, and shooting quick little looks up at him from the library table, as if she were fearful that he would suddenly snatch the plate away from her like a harpy.

At last she sighed, stretching her arms. She fumbled in her bodice and produced a packet of cheap cigarettes. She crossed her legs carelessly and leaned back, inhaling the smoke with audible breaths.

"Well, this is luck!" she declared gayly. "When you come into the vesti-

bule, I thought I'd keep still for once and see what happened. Do you live all alone here?"

Under the spur of clear relief, she rambled on ingenuously, tirelessly, as if she desperately needed to talk to some one, to any one. She had a room over near Third Avenue, she told him; kept by a nice lady, it was; and she had stopped in out of the rain, which was "something fierce," on her way home; her name was Kathleen Joyce; and why was he looking at her that way—she wasn't a murderer or nothin'!

Steven, deep in a great wing chair, had an air of tolerant judgment, with his eyes half closed and his finger tips touching. He was studying her, and marveling at her sparrowlike pertness, her curious, blurred air of innocence, her stained youth.

Suddenly he rose and strode over to her. She stood up lazily with inviting arms and lips lifted. He kissed her hotly. The surge of his emotion swung back like a pendulum. All at once he felt a little angry at himself. He released her, and pushed her down into her chair. Then he helped himself to a long cigar, lighted it, tossed three or four cushions beside the hearth, and switched off the light.

"Sit down there!" he commanded.

Her mute, instant obedience was delightful, and in the glow of the firelight her face and slim figure seemed wistful and romantic. The realization that she was still quite wet occurred to him, and he went upstairs rapidly and returned with a pair of red morocco slippers and an old velvet dressing gown. He unlaced her shoes, held her feet toward the flames until she gave a little squeal, and then fitted them with the slippers. Giggling, she explored for her toes as a baby might. Steven wrapped her in the long, soft dressing gown, and she lay back watching him with grave blue eyes.

Steven was no man of the world, and

he was privately shocked, and inclined to consider her a trifle theatrically. But, speaking in quiet tones, he had the grace to probe for her story and not ask the blunt questions that lay in his mind. It was a meager little story, delivered in a defiant and careless voice.

"Gee! I've always liked men," she declared.

"But your people, your parents?" he suggested vaguely.

She disclaimed knowledge of them, disowned them airily. All sorts of sentiments ventured to Steven's lips, but he was afraid to utter them for fear of proving himself ridiculous or a prig. She touched him immensely, and not any philosophy nor all his wide reading could prevent him from connecting the little figure with lurid and sinister imaginings. She lay curled up drowsily beside the crackling fire, and he was stirred by a vast tenderness for her. There was nothing brazen about her, for all her externals. Beneath her surface coarseness there ran a fiber of sensitiveness. A touch here, a direction there, a cleverly simple frock, and alteration of accent and manner, and—

Steven's train of thought brought him to a sharp, arresting fancy. Why not cultivate her, tutor her mind, make her over according to his taste? He wasn't, of course, fool enough to think he might reform her, nor Puritan enough to wish in his heart that he might do so. Her life, after all, was far happier than that of the average tenement drudge. She was designed for love. Her slim body enticed him. Why not fit her with superior trappings? She could remain here during the trial; there was no such thing as neighborly scandal; and she could occupy Mrs. Gunn's room.

"Kathleen," he began solemnly, "how old are you?"

"I'm nineteen."

"Do you like me?"



"I love you," she replied mechanically.

"I asked: Do you like me?"

She gave him a pondering scrutiny. Her eyes measured him seriously. She spoke with aggressive jauntiness.

"Yes, but you're funny. I don't know you yet. Oh, how do I know?"

"Kathleen I want you to stay here—in this house—for a few days. I want—it's difficult to tell you what I want." He blundered ahead in awkward, barely intelligible sentences, but she seemed to comprehend. He was relieved when she did not deride his suggestion with crude cynicisms. She spoke slowly and in a low tone.

"I'll do what you want me to. I know I don't know much. I—I—you can try if you like."

Her submission was almost pathetic, and there was a puzzling quiver in her voice. But Steven did not notice. He was reflecting that her careless garb, her overvivid color, her twisted smile, and a dozen other defects, could be toned down or eliminated. She was undeniably quick, but she was thoroughly obvious. He was certain he could read her every thought.

The fire dulled into embers, and Steven walked to the windows and found that the rain had ceased. He bent to the little figure, and lifted her in his arms. He carried her upstairs, her head pillowed on his shoulder, and laid her on Mrs. Gunn's bed.

For a moment he stood there, looking down. Poor child! He did not now desire her too ready caresses; he would develop her first, and thereafter genuinely win her simple affections. He would let her know that she was not required to make love, but could proffer it as she herself chose. No other love was worth the winning.

Steven sighed sentimentally, kissed her brow very gently, and went from the room, softly closing the door behind him.

## II.

In the crowded, interesting week that followed, Steven Trayle discovered among other things that the simple affections of Kathleen Joyce would not, at any rate, be won by him. She appeared, in fact, to take an active distaste to him from the first. He was amused, rather than discomfited, for he was not vain as most men are vain.

A woman of society, a woman of the stage, had previously made him frank avowals which had later been revealed as sheer verbal exercises. Kathleen Joyce, more honest, snubbed him clumsily, and sought, by a hundred pathetic, apparent devices, to humiliate and hurt him.

Steven took those feeble buffetings with a smile; and he found it satisfaction enough to watch how earnestly, how laboriously, she tried to follow his instructions.

It cost her a little struggle to give up paint; under the delusion that he found rouge ethically objectionable, she taunted him for primness, but came downstairs, nevertheless, with clear, pale cheeks. Steven was innately tactful, but no matter how he veiled his suggestions, these sometimes made her wince. Once he found her lying face downward in her room, weeping bitterly. He began to fondle her as he might have coaxed a child back into playfulness. She fell instantly silent, and a little tremble ran through her body at the touch of his hands.

But her outward appearance had changed. He told himself that he might succeed in elevating her from her tawdry caste to the semisocial plane of the demimonde. He learned that she was instinctively chary of her love. It served the purpose of keeping her scantily alive, and she was no mere casual of the streets. She boasted that natural attraction was as persuasive a factor as money, and she was not mer-

cenary. And Steven, in his unfathomable innocence, never thought it odd that she should strive so hard at these lessons of his.

He could not, of course, destroy her accent in a week. But he taught her to speak seldom and to say little. He managed to convince her that a grave stare became her, and that her shrewd, twisted smile marred her. He began to drill her in the pronunciation of a few formal phrases, forcing her to repeat over and over some minute correction. She would give him hard, raging glances, and even snap at him with lines of invective, but she ended always by a painful attempt to do as he desired.

And Steven lost himself, forgot himself, in creation. She was as important to him as the material marble to the sculptor, but no more animate. He forgot that she had a soul of her own in his insatiable desire to remodel her surfaces. He was solemn and blind, he was even stupid. Steven Trayle, for once, was lacking in a sense of humor.

That week, so packed with detail, gave an impression of flying like an arrow and yet crawling interminably by. It culminated with a purchase of expensive, conservative clothing, upon which Steven, not a little embarrassed, took the word of a modiste in a smart Fifth Avenue shop. He and Kathleen themselves bore the boxes reverently home.

To-morrow, he decided, she could give a dress rehearsal of her new perfections. And that evening he drilled her, with his low, persuasive voice, in the decencies of table manners as they occupied together a quiet corner in a quiet restaurant.

Her eyes flashed angrily, and then darkened on the verge of tears.

"I hate you! I hate you!" she declared in a fierce whisper. "You! What do you know? Tellin' me what I ain't to do, and——"

"Telling me what I'm not to do, Kathleen."

Her breast heaved, and one brief sob shook her. She controlled herself with an effort.

"You—you——"

"Telling me what I'm not to do," repeated Steven's gentle voice.

She faltered miserably.

"Telling me what I'm not to do," she echoed faintly.

"That's a dear girl!" said Steven in much the same light manner that he would have approved a kitten.

He shook his head. It occurred to him again how tremendously she disliked him. But he told himself that the day would come when she would thank him for what he had done. And wasn't her acquiescence in striving a proof, after all, that she was already aware of the value of his services? He reflected that she had really done amazingly well; he would tell her so to-morrow, make her some little gift, pay her pretty compliments, give her the sugar her childlike nature craved.

But his plans were overturned by a telegram which awaited him when he returned to the old brown house. An aunt, his mother's sister, had died suddenly in her New England home. Steven had never known her well, nor cared for her greatly, but as one of the links of relationship is broken, the rest grow stronger and more powerful. He had a definite sense of loss. He would have to leave immediately and comfort his cousins, and appear appropriately mournful.

He gave Kathleen a sum of money and the run of the house. Telling her to be a good girl and to try to remember what he had taught her, he compiled a list of books for her to read, packed a grip, and caught a late sleeper for Boston. He was not aware that she pressed her face to the glass and peered out after him until he was long lost to sight, or that she went presently to a

closet where his overcoat hung, and pillowed her warm face in its folds.

### III.

Steven Trayle had behaved with that mixture of egotism, selfishness, and cruelty common to sentimental reformers. But in the main he was none of these things, and he was to pay deeply for his lapse. Long afterward he was to remember, with a heavy heart, the details of the afternoon of his return.

The funeral had been trying, and he came into town, nursing a sense of melancholy, a sense of the futility of a life that, whether good or bad, heroic or shameful, speeds to the selfsame goal. It didn't matter, nothing mattered. No doubt in another twenty years he, too, would be the cause of inconvenience to some distant relative. And he was tired by a dreary train journey.

The thought of Kathleen Joyce revived his interest as he drove homeward. Dusk was falling and a faint breath of summer hung listlessly in the streets, as if waiting for something to happen which would never happen. Poor Kathleen! Steven shut his eyes and visualized again that chance encounter on the night of the storm. He had dropped her a word, announcing his return. He wondered idly if she would be interested enough to meet him. Her face, which mingled the curves of youth with something coarse, bright, and sinister, rose before him, and he saw her for the first time as living flesh and blood. His overwrought nerves throbbed with swift desire.

He flung open the door and called her name. There was no immediate answer. Then a rustle spoke to his ears, and she stole in before him with shining, hopeful eyes.

"I'm so glad you're back!" she mur-

mured timidly, and her voice was modulated and her enunciation precise.

She stood there utterly unlike the battered little waif he remembered. Her quiet, dark frock, her pale cheeks, her subdued manner—these had worked, in part, the transformation. What had happened was quite clear. She had tried to surprise him. While he had been gone, she had anxiously studied, out of gratitude perhaps, all his precepts. How often had she rehearsed those few trite words of welcome, gravely uttered, carefully pronounced, before the mirror?

Yet Steven confronted her, hesitant, puzzled, confused. For a very strange thing had happened. He had only recently seen his well-groomed cousins and one or two girls of breeding and poise, and the impression remained in his mind. Beholding now his handiwork, he had a sharp, painful shock.

Kathleen had lost the larger share of her attractiveness!

Yes! That was so, beyond denial. He had been too close to her before to see that quietness did not honestly become her, that it robbed her of individuality and made her commonplace. The very coarseness in her, the coarseness of flaunting costume, of jaunty, ceaseless chatter, of heavily rouged cheeks, darkened brows, red lips, insolent gestures, had given her an odd, sensuous appeal. Standing silently before him now, she looked as uninspired and uninteresting as the most colorless of stenographers. He had eliminated those very characteristics which had unconsciously attracted him.

"What's the matter?" she asked, made anxious by his stillness and by the queer expression of his face. "Has anything happened? Listen! No, I didn't mean to say that. Honest, I—"

As a sculptor might smash with a mallet the creation which has deceived his dreams, Steven Trayle strode over

to her and, throwing his arms about her, kissed her with a laugh.

"I made a mistake, my dear," he muttered. "I should have left you as you were. Of course you hated me!"

She had yielded herself tremulously; he could feel her heart beating, and her oval face was lifted with tightly closed eyes and a mouth which was drawn as if in agony.

Steven laughed again, a little discordantly. His lips found hers, and he spoke in a carelessly bitter strain which mocked himself and mocked her. His smile, his voice, were cruel with contempt. All at once she appeared to hear what he was saying for the first time, and her eyes fluttered open.

"You little harlot!" he cried. "Fetch your scents and your rouge pot again. I was a fool!"

She tore herself free with a single, loud outcry. He followed her through the darkness of the wide hallway with leaping pulses. She shook his hands from her shoulders and, as she turned, brushed her cheek, wet with warm tears, against his face.

Anger swept through him at what he conceived a cheap trick to gain his sympathy. He did not know that a woman can suffer, and at the same time, no matter how great the suffering, find a practical use for it. He shouted at her, he hardly knew what, but she evaded him again, and ran sobbing to snatch up her hat.

He caught her wrist as she flung open the doorway. She turned, and in the dimness of the vestibule he had his last glimpse of her face where he had first beheld it. The lips were quivering wretchedly, and the eyes fell upon him with a wild and beaten look as she jerked herself free and fled down the steps.

And then, sharply there came to Steven Trayle ironic realization. This girl had truly loved him! It was for that that she had striven so desperately

to follow his suggestions. All her fatuous little stabs had had the perversity of self-inflicted wounds.

He spun around with an oath, and hurried into the street. It stretched before him unfathomed as a labyrinth where vague and unfamiliar figures wandered mechanically in the darkness. Kathleen Joyce was gone.

Steven strode about, fruitlessly looking for her, and it was over an hour before he returned, sick in spirit. He cursed himself, and waves of remorse rushed over him. He had beheld the comedies of love and found them empty. And here was a sordid tragedy of love that stung him with guilt and a misery of his own fashioning. He told himself it was an episode in the life of a light woman who existed by emotion, who had known many lovers, who would forget him in the caresses of the first passer-by. But, face to face with actuality, he could not quite convince himself that he had not done an irreparable wrong.

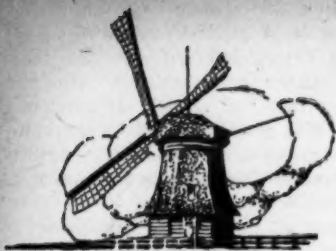
For an instant the thought that she might come back, that she had already done so, flickered in his mind, as he retraced his steps. Then he told himself conclusively that the home to which he returned was empty of any living presence. But here he was wrong. As he stepped into the hall, a noise from above stairs caught his attention, and his heart jumped with hope.

"Kathleen!" he cried unsteadily. "Kathleen!"

Listening intently, he caught a medley of familiar sounds.

"Ah, and it's time I was back, what with the house running to wrack and ruin! And him none the better, I'll guess. After all that I've done for him, too! Well, I'll not stand it forever, I won't, and those are the very words I told Mrs. Biggles."

Steven Trayle brushed his hand across his forehead. Dully he noticed that his fingers were wet.



# Rose of the Minstrel

By Leslie Burton Blades

Author of "Claire," "The Fighting Odds," etc.

WHEN she was fifteen, Rose faced the first great issue of her life. Standing beside her father's bed, in a dingy rooming house, she listened silently to his half-delirious talk before death claimed him. And, although her heart was racked with misery, she did not weep.

In dying, Patsie Jarvice attained the one superb, dramatic moment in his wide career. Traces of last night's grease paint still showed in the odd lines about his eyes. His big mouth wore its customary grin, and his inconsequential nose and the puffs of flesh beneath his eyes made him look ridiculous as always. But Rose did not see that. There was an austere grandeur, as well as something divinely splendid in his gaze. A strong, clear love for his daughter, worry, and something unexplainable shone from a hidden chamber of his mottled soul. His voice was harsh from years as a comedian and salesman in a tent medicine show.

"Rosey," he said, "the curtain's fallin' on your daddy Patsie. It's kind of shabby, ditchin' you this way, here in a sagebrush town, but I can't help it. The boss of the big show has ordered down the curtain."

She would have stopped him with a burst of tenderness, but he held her silent with his gaze.

"You'd better sell the outfit, Rosey. Don't try to stick it out with the minstrel boys. They'll buy, but don't let 'em skin you! The tent and dope are

worth two hundred, anyway. Go savin' with your money, girl, and hook up with a better show. Stick to the business, though. The stage is your big chance. You got the stuff your daddy never had, Rose—you can act."

He ceased abruptly and fell back. Rose knelt beside him, her head resting on the flat, short hand.

"Daddy, daddy Patsie!" He was dead. Suddenly, tears washed her burning eyes, dropping into his unresponsive palm, and great sobs stifled her impulsive protests.

Two hours later she found the minstrel quartet in the funny rooming-house parlor.

"Dad is dead," she stated simply, a new dignity for the first time apparent in her carriage.

They spoke their sympathy in crude, but kindly phrases. Then, with a readiness which hurt the girl, they began discussing the situation of the show.

"We can't stay here," the big bass growled indignantly. "One of them tent rep shows got in last night."

The tenor spoke to her, a half-veiled eagerness in his bold eyes.

"You'll want a manager and salesman, won't you?"

"No," she said quickly, and her lips trembled. "I'm not keepin' up the show. I'll sell it if you want it."

They stared at her a moment in surprise, then conferred together.

"We'll buy it if you'll take a hundred dollars."



Experience had taught her long ago that sentiment was not a great factor in business.

"Dad told me it was worth two hundred."

They argued, pointing out the necessity of hiring a new comedy salesman.

"We're not rich. Maybe we'll bust. We'd like to help you, Rosey, but we can't."

"All right," she told them quietly, "I'll keep the outfit."

They argued, but the girl remained obdurate. Patsie had said the tent and stuff were worth two hundred. They paid it in the end, but with many protests.

"We'll give you five a week and cakes to go along. You can recite and carry dope to buyers. You're a good actress, Rosey, and your looks draw money."

"No," she said, slipping the roll of bills they gave her under her waist. "Daddy told me to hook up with a better show." She was thinking of the tent repertoire company which had just entered Elsburg.

The quartet wished her luck, shook hands with her, and left. The Jarvice minstrel medicine show was gone forever.

A few days later Rose went to see the manager of the tent troop. He eyed her appraisingly before he spoke.

"So you want to join my company?" He was a short, thickset man with squinting eyes and heavy jowls.

"Yes, sir, I'd like to."

"Ever acted?"

"I've recited all my life for dad."

"Who is he?"

"Patsie Jarvice."

"Oh!"

For a few moments the manager and owner of the All-Star Company studied the girl with calculating eyes.

"I lost my leading lady up the line," he said at last. "She ditched me and married one of those jays. I made up

my mind then that I'd never have a single woman in my troop again. How old are you?" He tipped his chair well back and watched her face through narrowed lids.

"Fifteen and a few months."

"How's your study?"

"I learn very fast."

"I don't know. I wired the agent at Chicago for a lead. 'Course, I could change, but I'm afraid you haven't had the experience. I want a trooper who can play anything."

"I'd like to try. I think I could soon learn."

He studied her a long time silently.

"Got any money or are you strapped?" he asked suddenly.

"I have two hundred dollars."

"I see." He thought for a moment.

"I'll tell you. I'd like to have you, but you're single. I made up my mind against single women. Then, too, you never played in repertoire and it's no cinch. But you've got the looks. Then, you're young, and that's an advantage sure enough. I've half a mind to try you."

"I wish you would. Oh, if you would!" She was looking at him with starry eyes.

"I'll tell you what!" He grew immediately friendly, leaning toward her with an intimate air. "I'm only a young fellow, and I'm single. I'll marry you, decent and honorable. I'll take good care of you. You'll learn to love me and by Jove, with looks like yours I'll make an actress that will beat the world! What do you say?"

Rose was utterly astounded. Her mind was blank. Then she remembered her desolation, Patsie's last advice, and her own ambition. And Amrey was not unlikable.

"You'll need a wardrobe," he went on. "A leading lady has to have trunks full of clothes. I'll see to that. I'll be a good man to you."

She knew no one in all the world



from whom she might expect even such a promise.

"I—I guess I might," she faltered.

"We'll go right down to the justice of the peace," he said. "And you'll be Mrs. Steven Amrey of the All-Star Company. A leading lady that will be a leading lady!"

Rose did not realize that Steven Amrey was saving himself ten or fifteen dollars a week by his marriage. Her inexperience was fathomless, and Amrey hid his dealings beneath kindness.

Rose gave him her two hundred for safe-keeping. They were married that same day and she went back to Amrey's tent. Already he had given her a bulky pile of dog-eared manuscripts. She must learn rôles at once.

Fingering over the scripts, Rose had the first great thrill in her profession. She would play leads in "Wedded, But No Wife," "Uncle Tom's Cabin," "Tempest and Sunshine," "Charlotte Temple," and "East Lynne." Later, when she had learned those, there were half a dozen others waiting, old pieces all of them, full of intense emotion, melodrama. To her, they were the supreme masterpieces of the stage, and in the work of learning the long leading rôles her sorrow at her father's death became less poignant, the new adjustment to her husband's life less trying.

The All-Star Company consisted of some half dozen people. All of them were expected to do double duty. The heavy man played the cornet between acts, the second woman was pianist, and the ingénue, older than Rose by several years, was violinist. The juvenile was property man and stage manager. The leading man, Amrey, was director and manager. They lived in the large tent which served as a theater, sleeping with only curtains separating them from their associates.

Amrey paid from five to ten a week and board and room for his actors.

Rose was accustomed to the camp life. She helped prepare the food and set to the task with an abounding energy, learning her parts between time. Within a week she was prepared to open with any one of the first four rôles which Steve had given her.

Whatever else he may have been, Rose found that Amrey was a driver. He knew precisely what he wanted from his actors and he got it. There were times when she believed that she could never repeat a scene again, but he kept at her, making her go over lines a dozen, twenty times, before he would accept her rendition.

Her first performance was an admitted success, and she soon began to feel the jealousy of the ingénue, Priscilla Berry. Rose realized the venom of stage spite. Priscilla would ruin a scene by tricks of movement.

A beginner, Rose had to learn the countless devices of stagecraft, movements, changes of attitude, shifts in inflection, by which to hold the audience despite petty interruptions. For three years she worked unceasingly, and in the end she was an actress of no mean ability. Much of her work was crude, spoiled by the unnatural manners of a "rep-show star," but she showed talent and she was beautiful.

Her hair fell like a sunny cascade almost to her knees, and in her deep brown eyes was endless play of light and shadow. Her tall young body, lithe and full of grace, suggested summer willow, and there was something regal in her movements.

At eighteen, late in the winter of her third year with the show, Rose suffered a complete physical breakdown, as the result of the manifold duties and the hardship of show life. They were playing little towns in Mississippi and the season was exceptionally bad. The boll weevil had destroyed the cotton crop that fall and people could not afford the theater. Ordinarily, the

farmers drove from miles around to see the show, but this year receipts were steadily diminishing, and finally Amrey felt obliged to move on to some more prosperous town.

"Look here!" he snarled at Rose. "This is a pretty time for you to quit acting. I can't afford to hire another lead. You know how business is—what do you want to make more trouble for?"

But Priscilla Berry promptly offered to step into Rose's place, and the troop made ready to leave.

"I'll have to leave you here," Amrey told Rose the night before they started off. "I'll give you all the money I can scrape together and I'll send you more as soon as possible."

Rose did not protest. Anything seemed better now than to go on dragging weary feet across a hot tent stage. Amrey left her fifty dollars, promising to send her more within the week. Not until the show had vanished from Glory Hill did she discover that he had taken most of her wardrobe for Priscilla.

The week passed happily for Rose. Rest was all that her tired brain and body wanted. Saturday brought her a complaining letter from her husband, but no money. He was not able to send more this time, but later he would send twice as much. That letter was the last she heard from him.

She wrote him again and again, but her letters were returned "unclaimed." Meanwhile her funds were fast diminishing.

Bit by bit, after the first weeks of physical exhaustion, the renewed energy of youth and vitality began again to set her pulses throbbing with great dreams. Her mind turned toward the stage as naturally as migrant birds turn southward in the fall. She bought a *Clipper*, and its old familiar discussions brought instant color to her cheeks and sparkle to her eyes. Reading its list

of want advertisements, she came upon one which suggested possibilities:

Wanted, a beautiful young leading lady with metropolitan wardrobe. Must be seasoned trooper. Will play all dramatic rôles on high-class boat show. Woman with specialties preferred.

Rose lost no time in sending her pictures and the programs of her three years in the tent show; and the answer came at once:

Join show at Hannibal, Missouri, September 18.  
DONALD GEORGE.

Through the succeeding five years and a half Rose Jarvice lived upon the steamer. Poking its nose into the many tributaries of the Mississippi, the boat would moor at some town dock, and posters with great, screaming type below Rose's picture would announce that "Rose Jarvice presents 'Magda' with the sublime emotions of a mighty soul. She is an actress paramount." And people sanctioned what the poster claimed.

Then, when she was almost twenty-four, her marriage a dimmed memory of which she never spoke, Rose had her big opening. On one of his tours East, Woodruff, the big stock man from Denver, stumbled upon the George boat show and, having seen Rose, asked her if she was open for a new engagement. She grasped the opportunity he offered. She served George notice the same day.

"I hate to see you go," he said, "but it's your big chance, Rose. I'll look for you on Broadway."

Rehearsals started on the day after Rose arrived in Denver. She was to open in "The Girl of the Golden West," then in its first release to stocks. The management planned a spectacular production, was spending heavily upon the bill, and Rose was told repeatedly how much depended on her. She worked hard.

The opening was almost upon her. She went from each rehearsal with less

confidence. Those days were full of trying hours, but they were happy.

Then, Ernest Southerland, the juvenile in the company, spoke to her reassuringly. He was a man of about her own age, fresh from the university at Berkeley and dreaming of the time when he, a playwright, would see his own productions on Broadway.

From the first time they met, Rose liked him. He was strong, self-reliant, yet not at all conceited. His deep-brown eyes were vivid pools of animate imagination. He dreamed, thought, acted, lived in drama.

"You needn't feel so doubtful, Miss Jarvice. The old man isn't half so frightened over you as he pretends."

"I hope not," said Rose, and she felt that in young Southerland she knew for the first time in all her life the sort of man she fancied.

The opening arrived. As she looked out for the first time beyond real footlights at the rows of eager faces, caught the quick-settling rustle into silence, and scented the warm perfume of a crowded theater, Rose Jarvice ceased to worry. She was no longer Rose, the daughter of a medicine seller. She was Minnie and the Girl of the Golden West. Her clear voice soared birdlike. Her eyes, her face, her body, took their swift, changing moods as racers gain their stride.

On through that first act she had so dreaded Rose played with a divine assurance. She was swept up and on by the strong tide of feeling which moves through the better plays.

A bit of conversation flashed through her mind and left a glow of pleasure. Southerland it was who had remarked, "To carry a whole house with your own personality—that must be wonderful!"

The curtain neared. Rose thought of the director. He was behind the set, anxiously awaiting her last line.

The time had come. The door swung

to behind the leading man, a fascinating stranger, and Rose, as the camp girl, leaned far across the bar, a glass gripped in her hand.

Her big eyes melted tenderly as she recalled the stranger's voice, and in her poise was youth's superb reverie.

"And he said I had the face of an angel!" The glass came down with a sharp click as she stood straight, a quick, half-amused smile upon her lips. "Oh, hell!"

There was thunder as the curtain dropped.

People who saw that first night in Rose's stock career tell of the mad enthusiasm roused by the new unknown beauty who spoke and moved with such superb eloquence.

That winter was a brilliant one in stock at Denver. The management spared no expense and Rose played in productions just released from Broadway.

Spring came at last. Rose was twenty-five and a success. She was supremely happy in her work, finding it always satisfying. Yet there was something lacking in her life.

She told herself that her unlimited ambition left always one more thing to be achieved, but something deeper warned her that this was not the lack she felt. There was Southerland, already a fast friend and close associate. When she was with him she was always conscious of increased happiness. At the same time she was depressed and saddened. Old facts rose grimly in her memory and she was never able to explain their coming. Amrey, snarling discontentedly, passed unexpectedly before her eyes.

Then, late in spring, Southerland called on her one Sunday evening and there was an exultant pleasure in his voice when he told her:

"Rose, I've sold a one-act skit. It goes on the Orpheum circuit!"

She fancied she heard many things

in the clear bass that sounded at her ear. Her answer was a leaping response to his mood.

Rose could just see the tenderness in his deep eyes. He moved to speak, he hesitated, put out his hand, and closed it over her cool fingers.

"Rose," he said, "I'm going to New York."

She drew her fingers from his grasp and interrupted swiftly.

"You should, of course, but we'll miss you in the company."

He shifted awkwardly and there was something resolute, that self-assured determination in his bearing. She wished with all her heart he would not speak.

"But you——"

She stood up with a sudden fevered energy. Deep in her soul, torn by a rush of loneliness and a hunger for the words this man would utter, was a strong hatred now of all that made it so impossible for her to hear him. She thought of Amrey, of those three loveless, bitter years. Perhaps she should already have told Ernest. But she could not.

"Ernest," she said, her voice so low that he could hardly hear it, "you will write me about your work, your triumphs?"

"I hoped it would not be necessary, Rose."

"But it is."

He smiled, a rueful, bitter smile of disappointment.

"Well, I suppose you have your own career to make. I could hardly hope that you would find time for me in all your life."

She wanted to cry out that he was all her life. Instead, she only laughed.

"Dear, foolish boy!" she said. "You know that I am always finding time for you. Of course I can, or I would not have asked for letters from you."

The next month saw Southerland's departure, and, defiant against grow-

ing loneliness, Rose flung herself again into her work.

It was during his season in Winnipeg, three years later, that Southerland's letter, with the news of his first triumph, came.

His first long play was under lights on Broadway, and scrawled across the last of many vital pages, she read the dear, frank statement of his love. It was not an easy task, but at last Rose wrote him the full story of her tent-show days.

The curtness of his answer lifted her spirit like the breath of spring's first wind. "I am coming for the new star of my second play," he wrote. And, true to his word, he was in Winnipeg within a week.

The years had made him even more desirable. There was a steadiness, a solid vigor, in his voice and bearing that bespoke growth, experience, success.

"I've seen a lawyer, Rose," he told her at length, "the best there is, and I find that we can easily and legally dispose of Amrey."

A sense of strong security, a feeling that here she would have always some one wholly dependable, swept over her.

"They have traced him down," Southerland continued. "He was last heard of six years ago in Mexico. At the time, he was starting into the mountains on a mining prospect. Within the week the Yaqui Indians went on the warpath. He was most probably killed. Legally, he is undoubtedly dead. There can be nothing now to fear from him."

The critics were divided in their comment on Southerland's play. They discussed it with ardent favor and vital antagonism, but all agreed that Rose was, beyond doubt, a star of the first order. The play would be successful. Night after night, packed houses proved the prophecy. It was destined to one of those phenomenal runs, even reaching into a second season.

The first excited weeks passed and Rose settled to the regularity of an established rôle. Southerland was anxious for their marriage and the date was set. It seemed, at last, that there could be nothing to mar their happiness, after so many years of struggle.

Looking back, the way seemed long, indeed, and yet it had gone swiftly, crowded with events which challenged character. But for Rose, at the end of the road stood Southerland, home, happiness.

Then, late in November, as she came one night from her dressing room, Rose came face to face with Steven Amrey. It seemed for just a moment that her mind had tricked her, tired after a performance, but her doubt was soon dispelled. His snarling half-petulant voice was unmistakable.

"Well, Rose, I always said you'd get here if you had a chance. It was me that gave you the chance and here you are."

"Steven, why did you? Where—I—" She caught herself in an iron grip of will. "Very well," she said, her voice controlled and even. "We cannot talk here. Come with me."

She moved toward the stage door.

Southerland met them as they stepped to the street. He had come up for her in a closed car.

"Rose—" He checked himself abruptly, catching sight of Amrey. There was an awkward pause. Rose tried to speak, and although her voice was quiet, it seemed to Southerland there had never been a more tragic cry.

"Ernest—Mr. Southerland, this is my husband, Steven Amrey."

She saw the playwright's face turn pale, a half satirical leer in Amrey's squinting eyes.

"Did you see Miss Jarvice play to-night? It is my work she is presenting." Southerland's suave tones had the cutting quality of steel.

She could not think. In her seething

mind there was but one mad certainty. She could not marry Ernest now, no matter how free her long life apart from Amrey made her. He had come back—her husband!

"When did you arrive, Mr. Amrey?" asked Southerland after a while. "Have you secured accommodations? The hotels are crowded over the Thanksgiving season." Southerland's even voice steadied her. She waited breathless for her husband's answer.

"I just got here. I haven't a room, no. Fact is, I'm broke—about as broke as that year in Mississippi, Rosey."

"I should be pleased to offer you the spare bedroom in my suite." Southerland seemed not to have heard the fellow's whining comment.

Amrey frowned, but said nothing. There was an awkward silence. At last Rose gathered herself for the ordeal.

"What is it you want, Steven?" She spoke through dry, hot lips, her eyes like pools of fire behind quivering lashes.

"Well, I want to live as fits the husband of a famous star!"

Rosa shuddered. Her nerves were not reliable. As she spoke, her hands went out almost in supplication.

"Leave me, Steven! I will see that you are taken care of. I will do anything, but do not torture me. It will be arranged through a lawyer."

"Now, Rose," said Amrey, "you're all upset about things. You know I wasn't a bad sort in the old days. Things went against us, that was all!" His eyes were warming to the power of her beauty.

Southerland moved to Rose's side.

"If necessary, you can easily secure a divorce," he said to her. "Will you allow me to send a reputable lawyer to you?"

"If you will, please." She did not look at Amrey.

"Meanwhile," Southerland continued



resolutely, "I will undertake to entertain Mr. Amrey. My flat is at your disposal as long as necessary."

Amrey accepted the inevitable with surprising grace.

"Well, Rose," he said, taking a step toward her, "I didn't think you'd go back on a man who started you when you was hard up. I'll make the best of it, though. I guess you're not so hard as to deny a little help financially. I'll trust you, anyhow. If you want me I'll be at this gentleman's rooms. I'll get my own as soon as I have money."

The next day Southerland called on Rose and there was a quiet friendliness, a stern repression in his manner that fortified his feeling. She could not blame him. It was only an inexorable conclusion to a mad dream. He had, of course, not until now realized the sordidness of her origin, the years which had consumed her youth.

"I suggested a divorce," he said. "It seems to me your only means of escaping from the fellow's sneaking claims. He will demand money constantly and you will have to pay or face a scene." He made no attempt to take her in his arms, showed no special tenderness.

"I cannot," she said in a low whisper. "Not this season, anyway. It is unthinkable."

Days dragged into weeks that seemed interminable. Rose grew steadily less vital in her acting. Her cheeks lost color and the rich, full charm of outline, while there was noticeable in all her movements an unwonted weariness.

What those months meant to Southerland were never known. He held himself in check with unrelenting vigor and there was something cold, an almost bitter iciness about his gaze. At last, he went to Amrey, feeling that something must be done. Rose would not secure the divorce which would have been so easy and, considering her position and the inevitable gossip that would follow, he could not blame her.

Perhaps he could persuade Amrey to do the decent thing. Somewhere in the fellow must be a sympathetic strain which could be touched.

He would persuade Amrey to go West, settle, and quietly divorce Rose there. It could be managed, and he was prepared to offer any inducement within reason.

Amrey heard him out and laughed.

"I guess I'm satisfied right here," he stated coolly. "It happens, Mr. Southerland, that Steven Amrey never drops a good thing for another to pick up. I like New York. Besides," he added hypocritically, "I did desert Rose once and I'm ashamed of it. I'm sticking now till she forgives and lets me make it up to her."

Southerland left the fellow, a mingled sense of loathing, despair, and rage possessing him. As he stepped into the street, he stood a moment, undecided. He was half tempted to go back and settle things, man to man, in the old elemental fashion.

There had been a sleet storm and the walks were covered with a film of ice. As he stood there an old woman, poorly dressed, a look of unutterable weariness upon her worn features, slipped and fell almost against his feet. He stooped with instant sympathy to pick her up. As he did so, he recognized her as one of the scrubwomen at the theater.

"Well," he said gently, supporting her, "aren't you one of the cleaners at the Republic?"

She recognized him and her pale lips smiled.

"Yes, sir," she said. "My! It's good for me all men ain't bad. Thank you for helpin' me. I guess, Mr. Southerland, some men are just made rotten to the heart, and others are made kind all through."

He saw the tears of pain and suffering which dimmed her eyes. His own unhappiness warmed him to her



misfortune. She seemed to want to talk, pour out her troubles, as one sometimes does, started by such a simple thing as an unexpected kindness. So he let her talk, listening the while with growing sympathy.

"I was just goin' in this very building. I thought I might get my husband to see me this time. He never will, and he won't help me, either, when he's well off. I used to work my fingers off for him. He's downright no good, that's all! He left me years ago, penniless, and now, when he's got money, he won't even see me! Mr. Southerland, ain't they no justice or anything to make him even see his wife?"

She was evidently appealing to him in sheer desperation.

"Why, yes," said Southerland. "There are the courts. You can take the matter into court. Will he do nothing for you?"

"No, sir, and I've tried to see him day after day this winter, too. I'd take it into court, I would, if I knew where to get a lawyer. If——"

"I could suggest one to you."

"Would you, sir?" Her voice grew querulous. "And would you tell him about it? I'd like to make that Amrey do as he ought!"

Southerland started, stared, and gripped her arm.

"Who—who did you say?"

"Steven Amrey is his name." She seemed afraid lest she had wrongly named the man. "I—is he a friend of——"

Southerland wanted to shout.

"See here!" He drew her into the steam-heated corridor. "You say he is your husband? How long ago did he marry you? Where? Tell me everything."

She did as he commanded, half in terror, half from the need to talk.

"And he married me twenty years ago, when we was kids," she ended.

"And now he's bein' cared for and he won't help me."

Southerland laughed outright. His eyes danced with the excitement of the moment.

"You needn't bother to ask him again," he said. "Don't even go up and attempt to see him. I'll send a lawyer to him and I'll promise you that he'll do the right thing by you not later than to-morrow."

He stopped her outburst of half-tearful gratitude, took her address, and saw her on a car. Then, wild with delight, he hurried straight to Rose.

"Rose!" He burst in on her like a madcap lad. "Rose, girl! You're free from Amrey! Free forever!"

She heard him with a sudden rush of happiness which died beneath a greater tide of terror.

"Ernest, you haven't done——"

"No"—he poured out his words in a swift flood—"I just found out that he is not legally your husband."

She started and her face grew even whiter than before. In silence she listened while he told her everything. It was no news of joy for her. A great cry burst from ashen lips and she hid her wan, tired face behind her trembling hands.

"Ernest, you will never care to marry me! I—I—oh, what a sordid wreck I made of youth and life and——"

His arms swept her against him in a sudden, swift embrace. His voice was like the laughter of great triumph.

"Rose, you never understood what I so often tried to say. That doesn't matter now. I love you, dear! I want you! And," he went on in a swift, happy voice, "we're going on our honeymoon at once. Your understudy can keep the theater open."

She smiled into his deep, warm eyes and no word came to meet her bursting feeling. She raised lips, warm with the promise of unequaled happiness, and her head settled on his shoulder.



# Bereaved

By Cloudesley Johns

**W**HAT'S happened to Pierre?" queried Fred Hunt, voicing the thought in the minds of all of us.

The nearly perfect waiter, for whom we had been feeling sorry for months without knowing why, was displaying unusual animation. The smile on his lips was the same as ever, genial and appreciative of the privilege of serving such nice gentlemen and ladies as those who happened to be at the tables assigned to him; but there was a light in his eyes which none of us had seen before. Again and again, as one or another spoke to him, he responded with an air of friendliness which did not seem quite fitting in one so perfectly schooled in his part in the drama of life; but always, just as the matchless Pierre seemed to be on the point of becoming unduly familiar, seeking sympathy with some strange mood which was upon him, his manner adjusted itself without any manifestations of embarrassment or uncalled-for apology, to the requirements of his station.

We had wondered about him, feeling that his perfection as a waiter had not been achieved as a great ambition, but through the wounded pride of one who had aspired in other directions and failed. Pride in something was manifestly a vital necessity to Pierre. He would have to take pride in his waiting, in the career which the swing and shift of circumstances had selected for him, no matter what his dreams had been.

He might have been endowed with a wonderful sense of the supreme charm of vocal music, and handicapped in expression by the lack of some essential quality in his voice. He might have had stupendous visions of artistic achievement, which some exasperating little mental twist prevented him from presenting in appreciable form to the world. He might have been almost anything, almost. He was the almost perfect waiter. His pride was preserved in that.

I had tried to talk to him at times, to induce him to reveal something of the repressed inclinations of his nature. He had shown me only that he understood my interest, and realized that it did not arise from mere curiosity; but beyond that he revealed nothing at all.

Most of us perceived that melancholy, a sense of baffled aspiration and dashed hopes, underlay the cultivated air of suave geniality. Therefore, we were surprised by a light in his eyes, such as none of us had seen in them before that night.

Apologetically he came to us with the check, long before the usual hour for the termination of his service, and explained that he had permission to leave early that night. We had been talking of him and of other matters in the realm of our collective experience, while sipping our coffee. Liqueurs had not been ordered. Pierre called another waiter to attend to our possible wants.

No one had tried to answer Fred Hunt's question. He repeated it to the new waiter:

"What's happened to Pierre? He seems more cheerful to-night."

The waiter assumed an air of lugubrious gravity as he answered.

"It is so sad! His wife died yesterday, and there are three little children. Pierre, he has to care for them now. His cheerfulness, *monsieurs*, that is his courage."

From the members of our group about the table came expressions of sympathy, and there was a furtive reaching for pocketbooks and purses. But my mind was filled with strange thoughts about Pierre and that unusual light in the eyes of a man whose wife had died, leaving him alone to care for three little children.

We paid our bill, left some money with the proprietor of the restaurant for Pierre, and went out. Half an hour later all the good nights had been said, and I was alone. My mind still clung to Pierre and his bereavement, and the strange light in his eyes. Was there another woman waiting? Could the kindly, genial Pierre be glad, so soon, that the mother of his children had gone from him, into infinity?

I went back to the restaurant and asked for Pierre's address. The proprietor intimated mildly that we already had been very generous, and that Pierre was a favorite waiter with many other patrons of the place. I did not enlighten him with regard to my real motives in seeking Pierre. Indeed, I did not formulate them very clearly to myself. I got the address and left.

## II.

I found him with his children. There were two girls, nine and seven years of age, and a boy of five. He seemed embarrassed at seeing me, and hastened to forestall any possible offer of

charity outside of the conventional channels by informing me that all was well with him and his little family.

I told him I was sorry to learn he had lost his wife. His eyes, fixed on mine, widened for a moment, and I knew there was a riot of thought in his mind. Then I saw his lips tighten, and he bowed his head.

I spoke to the children. They responded diffidently, but with intelligence. The girls were pretty, golden-haired and dark-eyed. The boy was alertly observant.

As I talked on, trying to put the little family at ease, while the father occasionally addressed some word to one or another of the children, I noticed that their manner toward him was almost as aloof, reserved, as it was toward me.

Finally Pierre, convinced that I had come with some definite purpose which I intended to carry out, sent the children away.

"Pierre," I began, "I'm puzzled."

"Yes, *monsieur*," he murmured, regarding me patiently.

"I'm not idly curious," I went on. "I write of the ways and the thoughts and the feelings of men and women. I do not use real names, of course, and I do not write of persons in a way that would show any one whom I had taken in real life as a character for a story."

Pierre nodded slowly.

"There is nothing in my life that would be of use to you," he said. "It is like so many other lives."

He gazed at me inquiringly, almost longingly, and I knew there was something he wanted to tell to a sympathetic listener, without regard to any use which might be made of the information.

"I have learned much, Pierre, from ordinary lives," I answered, "and gathered much material. I have a feeling, though, that in your life there has been something extraordinary. Let me

see if I am right. You have been always pleasant and often smiling, Pierre, but all of us have felt that you were not happy, that there was a real sorrow in your life."

He bowed his head, but did not speak.

"Last night," I went on, "there was a light in your eyes which might have been of gladness or relief from some strain. I thought of this, and wondered, when I learned your wife had died the day before. If you wish to tell me your story, Pierre, I shall be glad to hear it. If you do not, I shall not press you, but will leave you with my best wishes."

He did not seem to be listening. He did not look at me as he spoke, after a moment. It seemed as if he might have forgotten I was there.

"She was very beautiful," he murmured, as if in apology or explanation. He aroused himself from his reflective mood and raised his eyes to mine.

"I was a student of art," he said. "Hélène was a model."

His eyes for an instant held a warning and an appeal. I did not smile. I nodded gravely. Pierre went on:

"Her face, her form, fascinated me, as opportunity. She misunderstood, as I learned later. She thought I had fallen in love with her at sight, and grew angry when she found it was not so. She seemed mollified by my using her alone as a model, and my assurances, entirely honest, monsieur, that I would make her famous through the fame I would win.

"Then, slowly grew the feeling that Hélène, the woman, her personality, was inspiring me in my work. Really, monsieur, the work was poor. What I needed was work, application, real study; not inspiration and dreams. One learns those things, so often, too late!"

I was about to make some inane remark about it being "never too late,"

but Pierre, catching my thought, checked me with an upraised hand.

"I came to depend upon her," Pierre went on, "more than I realized. Still, monsieur, I was not in love with Hélène; and she, knowing this, was displeased. Yet she was filled with delight by my paintings of her. By this she lost something of my respect. I knew the merit of the pictures, or the lack of merit, meant little or nothing to Hélène.

"Ah, monsieur, one can see things and understand, looking back!"

He sighed and was silent for a moment. I offered him my cigar case. He took a cigar, bowing formally as he uttered his thanks in his almost perfect waiter's manner, and put the weed in his pocket.

"Won't you light up, Pierre?" I asked, as I began to smoke.

He smiled, with a little twinkle of appreciation in his eyes, and lit the cigar.

"It is not worth your while to listen, monsieur," he said, "but you are very kind."

Again he fell into reverie, uttering fragmentary reflections aloud, in scant recognition of my presence in the room.

"It was so strange, so absurd, that Hélène should be in love with me; but she was, monsieur, in her way. One day a new model was in the studio. It was a man, not young, and he could pose. He gave me an idea for a picture which would tell a story. I was painting when Hélène came in. I saw the quick flash of anger in her big, black eyes. Her beautiful form, so sinuous and graceful in its curves, stiffened. Monsieur, it is absurd, but I was frightened! I felt cold! I rose to greet Hélène with a warmth which was altogether pretended. Monsieur will understand how one does such things.

"I set aside the canvas I had begun and asked Hélène to pose. She did, but not with smiling grace. I remained

cold and frightened. I could not paint. I had a—what you call—presentiment. I felt something would happen. I might have known what it would be. It came next day. Hélène and I were married.

"It took me only a few weeks, monsieur, to realize that my career in art was over before it really had begun. I had not learned to paint. I could not learn to paint by simply sitting at an easel, staring at Hélène, and daubing the canvas; and that, I found, was all that Hélène would permit.

"I had to explain this to her at last. It was a very unpleasant scene. With bitter scorn she reminded me that I had promised to make her famous through my fame. I did not tell her that she had closed the doors of fame to me. It was bad enough, as it was. She accused me of being tired of her, of wanting to leave her. I had not thought of anything of the kind, monsieur.

"In many ways I tried to make money, for it was needed. Hélène must be well dressed, and also, monsieur, the first baby was coming. It was when we were almost without money that I went to work, just for an evening, as a waiter. It was very easy and there were many tips. There is something in my manner, monsieur, that made it easy for me to do well as a waiter. Again and again I went back to the work, in times of need, and at last accepted it as my calling.

"There was little warmth of affection in Hélène's nature. She was passionate, but cold, if monsieur can get my meaning. After I decided to accept waiting as a calling, all the affection Hélène may have had for me died; yet she clung to me the harder. She showed resentment at my going away to my work, not only because that work was not what she had desired for me, but because it was a part of my life which did not belong altogether to her.

"Monsieur," he said with a plaintive catch in his voice, "I always needed affection. I think I might even have left Hélène, though she was very beautiful and very strong of will, if the children had not come. As they grew, month by month, I found new life in them. I did not mind being a waiter.

"I read, monsieur, and kept myself posted on the progress of art. I would make artists of my children. Three artists were better than one, surely. That would be my part in the world! I was content, except for Hélène. It was hard for me to pretend to her that I had no interest in life except in her or through her, and yet, it seemed, I had to do this.

"I found, monsieur, that Hélène resented my growing interest in the children. She accused me of planning to make artists of them, and declared she would prevent it. Her children should not become waiters, she said.

"I do not say, monsieur, that Hélène planned deliberately to inspire contempt for me in the minds of my children, but she accomplished this. She was a woman of forceful character.

"There is so much in the books, monsieur, so much that is worth while, that one does not reach in schools. I had kept on reading with joy in the thought that I was to teach my children. This, too, monsieur, was denied me. Hélène made the children feel that anything I might tell them was not worth while at all, except perhaps to be laughed at. She did not do this directly, that I ever could see, but more by her manner toward me and her talk to me when the children were present.

"And so, monsieur, died my dream of companionship with my children. I tried to be content. I had Hélène, and she was a wonderful woman, and beautiful! I was pleased, also, to see that many of those in the restaurant, whom I served, were interested in me. We were in comfortable circumstances, too,



It should have been enough. But there was something lacking in my life, and I could not help feeling always that it was Hélène who stood in the way of my reaching it.

"And yet, monsieur, she cared for me in her way. She died in my arms, with her own white arms about my neck, crying because she was to leave me. I believe she felt always that I was dependent upon her strong will, her superior personality, for anything of success I may have made in life."

Pierre paused. He regarded me thoughtfully, impersonally, for a moment. I knew that the thing he had wished to tell, to relieve his mind, was still unuttered. I waited. It came at last.

"Monsieur, I know I shall feel lost without her, for a time, at least; but—it is a terrible thing to say—there is a feeling of relief. Life, after all this time, seems to be beginning for me again. I shall get acquainted with my children and, in time, I shall show them that I am worthy of respect.

"That is all, monsieur. There has been nothing remarkable about my life. It is too much like too many other lives. It was kind of you to listen to me."

### III.

It was three weeks after my visit to Pierre in his home before I happened to see him in the restaurant. The light of a new and vital interest in life, which our group had noticed the day after the death of his wife, had died. I could not question him there, and the next day I left New York for an extended stay.

A month later, I sought Pierre in his home. The light had come back to his eyes. We were talking of impersonal matters when the three children came in. They ran to their father and

climbed up on his knees, kissing him. His face shone with joy.

"It is very wonderful, monsieur," he murmured. "It did not take as long as I had feared."

He sent the children into another room, and went on:

"Hélène was fond of them, of course, for they were her children; and she was fond of me, in her way. But, monsieur, there was something lacking in her love."

"I'm glad you've found happiness, Pierre," I told him.

"I seek it," he answered simply. "In the happiness of my children, perhaps, I shall find it; or, perhaps——"

He flushed and paused. After a moment he asked:

"Did you notice, monsieur, the face of Agnes, the older girl?"

I nodded, not knowing what to say. The child was quite pretty, but otherwise she had not impressed me as being unusual. I could see, however, that there was some thought, portentous to him, in the father's mind.

"Isn't it a face to paint?" he asked ecstatically. "And she loves it, her face on the canvas, and loves me because I can do it!"

He arose and went hurriedly behind a screen at the farther end of the room, and returned with a small canvas. It was a half-finished portrait in oils of the little girl, Agnes.

I looked at Pierre. All the lost joys of a repressed life seemed burning in his eyes. Agnes ran in, crying out joyously:

"My picture, daddy!" She looked at me, demanding approval. Pierre, with anxiety in his eyes, simply awaited my judgment.

"Beautiful!" I murmured.

In reality, the picture was a crude and faulty piece of work, but that did not matter. There are lots of good pictures in the world.



# Ballade of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon

By Richard Le Gallienne

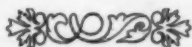
THE fierce queen wearied, and she smote her hands.  
"Send me my lord, the king," she spake, and sighed.  
"I sicken of these steaming shallow lands!"  
Nebuchadnezzar stood there by her side,  
Suppliant. She turned upon him, eagle-eyed:  
"Oh, king, would thou and Babylon ne'er had been!  
I die for pines and storms." "Amytis, bride,  
There shall be hanging gardens for my queen."

"Oh, for Assyria, where each mountain stands  
With pine trees to the peak, and the great stride  
Of the north wind, voiced as a god's commands,  
Shakes forests into music far and wide,  
Iron and granite song; and horsemen ride  
By foam of torrents, laughing, lances keen—  
But I mid ooze and baking bricks must hide!"  
"There shall be hanging gardens for my queen."

Night fell, and morning rose with crimson bands,  
About her couch the tiring maidens glide,  
And one that wove her hair in shining strands  
Spake softly: "Vouch, great queen, to gaze outside  
Beyond the curtains." And Amytis cried  
And laughed and wept for what her eyes had seen—  
Assyria at her window magnified!  
"There shall be hanging gardens for my queen."

## ENVOI.

"Queen," spake the king, "is thy heart satisfied?  
Unnumbered slaves and Night have wrought this scene—  
The rocks and pines of thine Assyrian pride:  
There shall be hanging gardens for my queen."



# Ainslee's Books of the Month

THIS SIDE OF PARADISE, by F. Scott Fitzgerald; Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.

THE surprise that "This Side of Paradise" was written by a youth in his early twenties is tempered by the realization that it is the daring of youth alone that would so bend to his own uses his medium, the novel, to make it express what he has to say with no caving to form. In this, his first novel, F. Scott Fitzgerald has succeeded in fashioning an interesting story and an entertaining book because of his non-dependence on accepted standards of novel making, and his easy method of saying what he has to say in the form that most appeals to him at the moment, or best seems to him to suit the particular subject on which he is then holding forth. His novel is not even divided into chapters, but at various points in the action, or jumps in time or incident, a crosshead is inserted and the story continues. Several of the love scenes are done as one-act plays, the insertion of poems—some of them startlingly good—and letters, to show states of mind, giving an exotic flavor.

The story is of the life of a young man, Amory Blaine, from childhood through Princeton, up to—and here the author makes his one bow to convention—the time he "finds himself." The last line of the book, in fact, is, "I know myself"—which justifies the hero's claim of cleverness. Surely no reader is yet thoroughly acquainted with him. Amory's mother is as interesting a creation in her way as the dissimilar, but reminiscent, mother of Rita Wellman's "Wings of Desire," succumbing to nervous breakdowns which bear, to her son, suspicious re-

semblance to delirium tremens, but, nevertheless, a brave raconteur, a lady of subtle moods and picturesque abandon. "I am feeling very old to-day, Amory," she would sigh to her young son, her face a rare cameo of pathos, her voice exquisitely modulated, her hands as facile as Bernhardt's. "My nerves are on edge—on edge. We must leave this terrifying place to-morrow, and go searching for sunshine!"

At the age of ten, Amory has no illusions about his mother, whom he greatly admires and whom he calls Beatrice. He can himself talk glibly of Mozart, Brahms, Beethoven. "Man-of-the-world" is his pose, even after a sojourn in an American school, where his reading consists of such famous works as "For the Honor of the School," "Little Women," "The Common Law," "Sappho," "Three Weeks," "Mary Ware; or, The Little Colonel's Chum," "Ghunga Dhin," the *Police Gazette*, and *Jim Jam Jems*. Of his early education Mr. Fitzgerald says only: "School ruined his French and gave him a distaste for standard authors."

The book breaks in the middle, The War, from 1917 to 1919, constituting an interlude. From the interlude on, the book slackens in pace, becomes more serious, earnest even, until we find Amory, the aristocrat, espousing something which sounds dangerously like socialism. At no point, however, does Mr. Fitzgerald allow Amory or the story to become dull. There is a conscious striving every moment for cleverness, for élan, for movement, which usually meets with success. The book is in the nature of a performance—a

tour de force. It echoes with H. G. Wells, with Verlaine, with Booth Tarkington.

MARGARET LEE.

BRUCE, by Albert Payson Terhune; E. P. Dutton & Co., New York.

TO those who learned to love Lad through the medium of the book in which his master extolled him, Bruce comes as a distinct treat. Its audience has been created by its delightful predecessor, and the enthusiasm with which it is itself received is no wit diminished by what must inevitably be in the nature of a repetition.

Bruce was a collie, "a superb specimen of his wonderful race." Born the son of Rothsay Lass, he bade fair at the outset to be both an eyesore and a nuisance about The Place. But, by and by, encouraged by the patient and nurturing care of the master and the tender love and forbearance of the mistress, there developed within him a soul. And souls, whether in men or beasts, have a common quality—they render human and sympathetic the bodies which they inhabit.

The devotion of a dog is much like that of a little child—simple and trusting. You may strengthen it and bring it out by gentleness and patience, but by ridicule and harsh treatment you turn it to deceit and treachery. By contact with kindly and affectionate humans, the good qualities latent in Bruce had been cultivated, and the change had been so gradual that it had been imperceptible, until he stood one morning before his master and mistress, a transformed dog, with a light in his eyes that had not been there before.

That portion of the book which deals with Bruce's war service, though fictitious, is, perhaps by its very nature, most entertaining. Bruce's keen intuitive perception made him invaluable as a courier and, indeed, as a detective, at the front.

In "Bruce" Mr. Terhune has not

only voiced a moving appeal in behalf of dogs the world over, but he has limned in new colors their genuine service and usefulness. But "Bruce" is, first of all, a good story. For entertaining quality, it ranks well with more intricately planned fiction. The method of its telling is simple and restrained. It reaches its emotional height in the rather anticlimactic incident of Bruce's burial, when, in eulogizing the heroic dog, big, raw-boned Sergeant Mahan says of him: "He was only just a dog—with no soul and no life after this one, I s'pose. He didn't work with the idea of getting a cross or a ribbon or a promotion—or to brag to the home folks about how he was a hero. He just went ahead and ~~was~~ was a hero. That's because he was a dog, with no soul—and not a man. If anybody thinks I'm cryin', he's a liar. I got a cold, and——"

H. L. L.

THE AMAZING CITY, by John F. Macdonald; J. B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia.

THE author of this book spent a number of years in Paris as the correspondent of English newspapers and magazines. He died in 1915 at a comparatively early age, but not too soon to have won a reputation for understanding France such as few foreigners come by honestly. Innumerable American and British scribblers go to Paris and in no time arrogate to themselves the authority to interpret things Gallic. They are responsible for enough volumes of balderdash to fill a respectable library. John F. Macdonald, however, was not of their type. I know of only one other contemporary journalist—Alvan Francis Sanborn, of the Boston *Transcript*—who has written of Paris, of French literature, politics, and social life with the insight revealed in "The Amazing City" and the two volumes which preceded it: "Paris of the Parisians" and "Two Towns—one City."

W. A. R.



# In Broadway Playhouses

By Dorothy Parker

## Plays in the Past and Present Tense

IT is undoubtedly a bad sign to find oneself becoming all keyed up over a drama of a bygone day. It means one of two things—either that one is growing old, or that one has been gazing oversteadily upon the output of contemporary dramatists. Either way, it is a deplorable state of things.

But there it is, and virtually nothing can be done about it. To one who has beheld with unprejudiced eyes and wide-open mind the early summer plays, the fact will ever remain that a revived antique drama surpassed appreciably all the new ones. "Foot-Loose" seems to be the only one of the batch of recent productions which can successfully hold one's attention all evening, against the counterattractions of the program's rhapsodies over pale kid shoes, eyelash stimulant, and chewing gum, all personally indorsed by prominent film virtuosos.

"Foot-Loose" has been made over by Zoë Akins—always painstakingly referred to as Atkins by those same conscientious souls who laboriously go out of their way to say Irving Cobb—from a drama of the early eighties called "Forget-Me-Not," which ranked as something pretty fairly daring in titles, in those days. "Forget-Me-Not" had a run extending almost from then on. It was played practically all over

what has been called the civilized world, and no actress could regard herself as really having made good in the profession until she had a try at the rôle of *Stephanie*, the original vampire. Yet it is a distinct strain, now, to imagine any one else having played it, for it seems to have been expressly written for Emily Stevens.

*Stephanie*, *Marquise de Mohrivar*, is another of those ladies whom Miss Stevens impersonates with such extraordinary skill. Indeed, she is the most spectacular, thus far, in the list. In comparison with her, the intrigues of the late *Sophie Arnould*, her immediate predecessor in Miss Stevens' repertory, seem about as dashing as the out-of-office-hours activities of a Methodist Episcopal deaconess. *Stephanie* leads countless lovers on to destruction, lures infatuated youths to ruin at her husband's gambling table, figures as one of the principals in a local murder, threatens her son until he kills himself, terrorizes her daughter-in-law, blackmails her way in society—in short, is scarcely the sort of girl that you would like to ask up to the house for Sunday-night supper.

But she presents a great opportunity to Emily Stevens, who plays with her expected, but always amazing, brilliancy. There are many who respond

too sympathetically to her nervous quickness of speech and gesture, and by the time the first act is finished, they are on the verge of complete collapse. Hence, they shun the staccato Miss Stevens, to sit, soothed, before Phoebe Foster or Jeanne Eagels. Perhaps Miss Stevens is still a bit too zealous in her devotion to her patron saint, the venerable Vitus, although she is considerably calmer in "Foot-Loose" than she has been of late. Yet, after long seasons of the humid sweetness and horrific cuteness so sedulously practiced by many of our most expensive leading ladies, Emily Stevens and her sharp intelligence seem as specially sent from a relenting Heaven. And when Alan Dale says, as he recently did, that he considers her the most fascinating actress on the American stage, one yearns to join in the cries of "Louder!"

"Foot-Loose" owes much to the services of Norman Trevor, in a typically sterling Norman Trevor part. O. P. Heggie is unfortunately cast as a murderer, a rôle which he plays with his accustomed air of wistfully wondering what everything is all about. One cannot imagine him as working up enough murderous intent to swat a marauding fly. Tallulah Bankhead plays her small part sympathetically, while Elizabeth Risdon recites each of her lines with admirable distinctness and care. I should like to hear her do "Under the spreading chestnut tree," some time.

And now, if the property man will kindly dust off the wax flowers and the orchestra will oblige with a medley of "When You and I Were Young, Maggie," "In the Gloaming," and "Darling, I Am Growing Old," we might look in at the Booth Theater upon "Not So Long Ago." Arthur Richman's little comedy is laid in New York along about 1875, in the days when eggs had risen to twenty-five cents

a dozen, when the merchants had the outrageous effrontery to demand three dollars a pair for shoes, and when the beauties at Tony Pastor's were driving the younger natives wild. The comedy has a mildly pleasant humor, a fragile charm, and much whimsical tenderness. In fact, one might almost say overmuch whimsical tenderness, and still be listed among the conservative element. For it is surprising what a long, long way even a little whimsical tenderness will go, upon the stage. Personally, give me but one or two acts of it, and I'll manage to scrape along for a whole year. And "Not So Long Ago" has three generous acts, besides a prologue and an epilogue.

Perhaps it is the inclusion of the kindly and unsuccessful old inventor among the characters that is partly responsible for the somewhat oppressive tenderness of the little play. It takes a hard and stern author to hold himself in, once he gets started on creating a poor old inventor; it is almost impossible to keep from letting himself go completely. The old boy in "Not So Long Ago," as devised by Mr. Richman and played by George Trader, is as pathetically quaint as all the other stage inventors who have gone before him. He has all the stock tricks—the shuffling walk, the depreciatory manner, the wistful smile, the apologetic speech, the benignant spectacles. Yet there is one great difference: his invention does not turn out to be a great success in the last act. This feat of restraint alone would mark Mr. Richman as one of the most promising of young playwrights.

Eva Le Gallienne does much for the rôle of the heroine, and the producers, by means of skillful settings, do much for the correct local color. Indeed, the cleverly applied and amusing local color pleasantly counteracts a great part of the determined sweetness of the play.

Speaking of local color logically



brings us right around to "Martinique," the Lawrence Eyre play at the Harris Theater. So much local color has seldom cluttered up our stage; large gobs of it, which the author leaves lying about, are continually getting in the way of the action and stopping its progress. And pretty mean it was of the author, too, to impede the action any further, for, it didn't even get started until somewhere around nine-forty. Practically the whole first third of the evening is given over to the most involved exposition yet known in the drama. An hour or so of solid exposition is rough enough even when done in English; but when every one engaged in it speaks either with a quaint West-Indian-French accent, or else lapses into French altogether, the listener who is conscientiously trying to gather what it is all about is left pretty fairly groggy by the time the curtain falls. For myself, I understood exactly two sentences. One was: "*Ouvrez la porte,*" on which I couldn't go wrong, because the speaker pointed to the door and some one promptly went and opened it; and the other was: "The De Chauvalons land must have a De Chauvalons heir," which was insisted upon at least once by every member of the cast. Just why it was so imperative that the De Chauvalons land should have a De Chauvalons heir—why no other sort of heir would do—I was unable to ascertain. However, maybe they are unreasonably fussy about those things down in the West Indies. I must ask our elevator boy.

But they are not so particular about other things, as one learns from an explanatory note on the program. Illegitimate children are regarded by the natives as all in the day's work. Hence, when, in "Martinique," the illegitimate daughter of the late Monsieur De Chauvalons drops in on the legal members of the family for a little surprise visit, it is considered extremely

inhospitable of them not to press her to make herself at home.

Owing to their upstage conduct, all sorts of complications set in. The illegitimate, yet spotless, heroine is forced to take up residence in "the quarter." There is a spectacular villain, an ardent lover, a delegation of local wild women and their suitors; there is a loveless marriage and a marriageless love and a murder, and all kinds of such things. In short, one would gather from the play that the only good West Indian is a dead West Indian.

But it all ends approximately happily, for one leaves the theater secure in the knowledge that the heroine is going to carry on the good work of illegitimacy, and that the De Chauvalons land will have its De Chauvalons heir.

"Martinique" is acted with appropriate fervor by Josephine Victor, with Arthur Hohl doing remarkable work as the villain. His villainous laugh alone ranks as one of the ten best performances of the season. Emmett Corrigan plays a benevolent abbot just as people always do play benevolent abbots.

It seems that there can be no flock of new productions without at least one among them which has to do with spiritualism. The thrifty playwrights are making the most of the public's present leanings toward the Other Side.

Well, anyway, the latest contribution to the spiritualistic drama is Anne Crawford Flexner's "All Soul's Eve," on view at Maxine Elliott's theater. Mrs. Flexner, it is said, originally designed her play to be a moving picture, and it is scheduled eventually to become one, when its stage run is at an end. And an exceptional movie it will undoubtedly make. The fortunate director will be able to spread himself lavishly on such scenes as the young mother's tragic death in a motor acci-

dent, the harrowing illness of the motherless little child, the grief-frenzied father's near-fall for the designing vampire, and the return of the mother's spirit, which enters into the body of an Irish nurse-girl, and sets everything right. Only think of the field it will be for the writers of movie subtitles!

Unfortunately, those very features which will be, so to speak, pie for the movie producers, present almost fatal difficulties to the stage production. To Lola Fisher falls the heavy task of tripling in the rôles of the mother, the nursemaid, and the mother's spirit. The movies can smooth all hitches away by means of double exposures; whereas on the stage, it is necessary for Miss Fisher, dressed, as the mother's spirit, in the conventional chiffon, to glide behind a screen, presently emerging made up as the Irish nursemaid. This laborious procedure makes it almost impossible to preserve the correct mystic atmosphere. When she disappears behind the screen, one rather expects her to make a lightning change to a red coat and a kilt, and come out to give an imitation of Harry Lauder; in fact, there is a distinct feeling of disappointment when all she does is the Irish servant-girl impersonation. That's such an old one!

Even more prevalent than the spiritualistic play, and far more difficult to bear with, is the Orange-Pekoe drama. The newest example is "His Chinese Wife" by Forrest Halsey and Clara Beranger, which came to the Belmont Theater for but a flying visit, from all present signs—and very good signs they are of the public's taste. The lady of the title rôle, with her quaint pidgin English, composed almost entirely of cunning "damns" and "hells," and naïve "Go chalse yourself's," is as aggressively artless as are all the other Chinese heroines which the last two seasons have brought out. Heaven knows that I strive to perform my work

conscientiously, to make an honest livelihood thereby; yet there are times when I feel that if I have to witness one more Chinese heroine, I will give up the struggle, let them take away the typewriter, and begin life anew as a general houseworker. Only if little Plum Blossom—or little Rice Flower, or little Cherry Stone—were guaranteed to speak nothing but her native language, do I feel that I could ever attend another drama with a Celestial heroine.

There has been no lack of musical comedies—which, when you come right down to it, is but another way of saying that there have been several musical comedies. Of them, "Honey Girl," seems to be going strongest at the present writing. It is a revision of the old stand-by, "Checkers," supplied with extremely pleasant music by Alfred von Tilzer and extraordinarily poisonous lyrics by Neville Flesson. Edward Clark, who did the book, has done some most amusing lines, the greater part of which fall to George McKay, as a race-track tout. The author has kept pretty faithfully to the original play, the most radical change being that the horse is now called "Honey Girl" instead of "Remorse," which doesn't really seem a remarkable improvement, when you come to think of it.

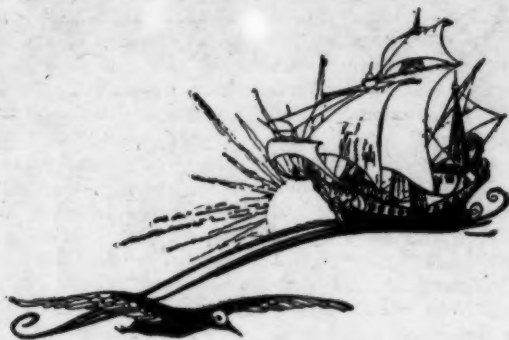
However, the horse still wins the offstage race, while the entire company stands about in strained attitudes, staring tensely into the wings; and reporting, in hoarse voices, the progress of the race to the audience. A horse-race scene on the stage always fills me with a bitter longing. I yearn some day to see a racing play wherein the horse on which the principals have placed all their money will be left at the post.

"Honey Girl" has a generous amount of clever dancing, an efficient cast headed by Lynne Overman and George McKay, and a nice, matronly chorus. Altogether, it ought to keep the Cohan

and Harris Theater in an agreeable state of congestion until well into the summer.

Of the other musical shows, "The Girl from Home," based upon Richard Harding Davis' "The Dictator,"

couldn't stand the strain of Broadway life, and went quietly away. Of "Betty, Be Good," at the Casino Theater, with the exception of a reference to Hugo Reisenfeld's pleasant music, it is as well to preserve a discreet silence.



### YOU AND MYSELF

**I**T was upon the moonlight's brink we met,  
And of its pallid evanescence drank,  
Then, hand in hand, across the sea we set,  
Bound for our Golden Wood.

And there it is we dream, and ever dwell  
Among the gold-brown leaves, you and myself,  
You, whom I do not know, yet know so well  
Whene'er the moon is full!

We rarely speak, while in our Golden Wood,  
But listen, drifting down the purple stream,  
To murmuring tides, that long have understood  
Life and its mystery.

Even if we should part, you and myself,  
And I should watch the moon rise all in vain,  
And in the Golden Wood not one small elf  
Could tell me where you were.

I still should know some night on some strange sea,  
A little storm-tossed boat with sampan sail  
In moonlight would come drifting back to me,  
Its captain always you!

MARY STEWART CLAFLIN.

## Talks With Ainslee's Readers

**THE NOOSE** was an internationally famous necklace, and its queen jewel was a marvelous emerald for which crimes had been committed. A girl named Coralyn had swept Paris off its feet with a sensational dance, and another girl named Genelle had been mixed up in a very shady transaction. Then the war had broken out, and the men and women involved had been scattered to the far ends of the earth. This is the kernel of the plot of "The Noose," Constance Lindsay Skinner's complete novelette, which will be featured in the September AINSLEE'S. But the narrative opens on a certain day in New York, after the termination of the war. Hughie Duyker and Jack Alenby are lunching with a fascinating girl named Joan Parker. All of them had played heroic rôles in Europe; now they are debating whether human beings are fundamentally changed by such experiences. The men hold opposing views, while Joan is noncommittal. At a house party shortly thereafter the question is settled beyond dispute, as far as they are concerned. For the past rises up in sensational fashion to test them. This is a novelette of thrills and surprises, cleverly staged. The love interest is woven in with the mystery of the emerald. It cannot fail to enthrall you and make you want to see more of Constance Lindsay Skinner's work.

**READERS** have made numerous inquiries about Nancy Boyd, the author of many striking short stories which have appeared in AINSLEE'S during the past year and a half. Of course, you remember her "Young Love," "The

Seventh Stair," "The White Peacock," et cetera. We have asked her to condense the story of her life into a paragraph for this department, but though she has promised to do so, she has, so far, evaded the issue. You see, Nancy Boyd is a case of dual personality. The name she signs to fiction is a pseudonym, while under her "given name" she is well known in quite another line of creative work. Some day we hope to induce her to confess for your benefit. In the meantime, we don't mind telling you that she was born in Maine, and is under thirty. She will contribute a delightful short story, entitled "Nothing in Common," to the September number of AINSLEE'S.

**OTHER** authors who will be in our table of contents next month include F. Berkeley Smith, Solita Solano, Jaime Palmer, Pauline Brooks, Paul Hervey Fox, Vennette Herron, Dorothy Parker, and Anice Terhune. "The Woman in the Mirror," by F. Berkeley Smith, is one of those stories with a French setting which the son of F. Hopkinson Smith knows so well how to write. The hero goes to consult a physician and behind the latter's back he sees a beautiful woman wigwagging signals of distress in the mirror. We shan't tell you any more about it than this; what happened will be made clear in the September AINSLEE'S. Jaime Palmer's story, "Grafted Fruit," presents the case of the Americanized Latin, with the inevitable problem of mixed marriages. Anice Terhune will sketch the vivid career of Ginevra Amieri, a "super-woman" of the Italian Renaissance.



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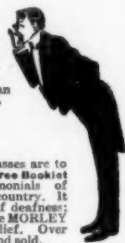
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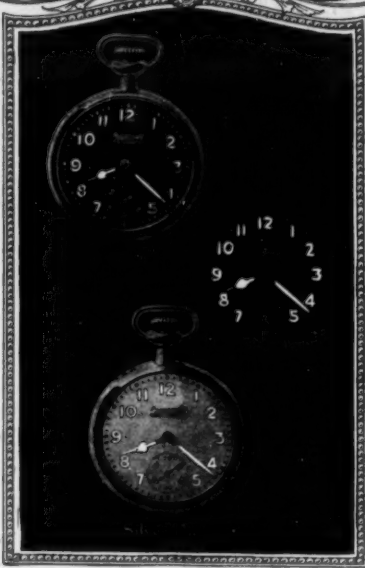
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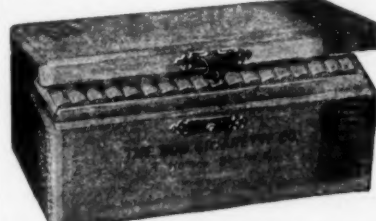
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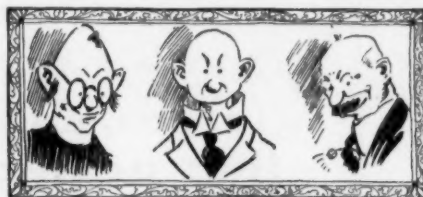
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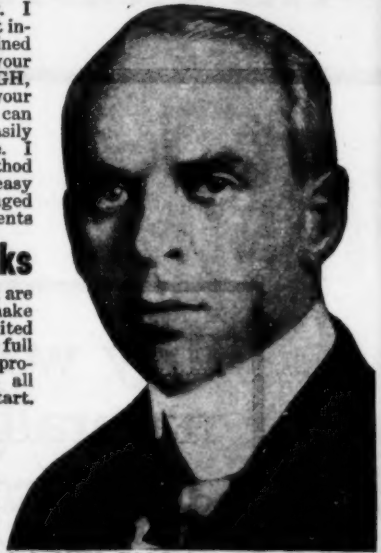
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Why should you continue to work for small pay when you are free to accept my great offer? A splendid opportunity to make your ambitions come true, to prepare yourself for unlimited success, is easily within your grasp. Write me at once for full particulars of my offer to fit you to graduate in this profession, with a valuable Certificate of Competency, all ready for big money-making work, right from the start.

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I guarantee your success in the study of my home course. I also give you my services in securing a satisfactory position—*free*. For five full years after you graduate I will stand back of you—aiding you in a practical way to make a solid and substantial success. Think of it! You will enjoy advantages and privileges with me unobtainable elsewhere. You can complete your studies with me here in my great shop; or I will help you get started in business for yourself if you prefer. To aid you in getting started, I will **GIVE** you, as my student,



L. L. COOKE, Chief Engineer, Chicago Engineering Works; formerly with American Bridge Co., Pressed Steel Car Co., and Michigan Iron, the great international Engineers, London, New York, Cape Town, Hong Kong.

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## In other words

Camels supply everything  
you hoped for in cigarettes!



Camels are sold everywhere in scientifically sealed packages of 20 cigarettes for 20 cents; or ten packages (200 cigarettes) in a glassine-paper-covered carton. We strongly recommend this carton for the home or office supply or when you travel.



# Camel

## CIGARETTES

**Y**OUR taste will prove that in quality, flavor, fragrance and mellowness Camels give you a *real* idea of how delightful a cigarette can be! You will greatly prefer Camels expert blend of choice Turkish and choice Domestic tobaccos to either kind of tobacco smoked straight.

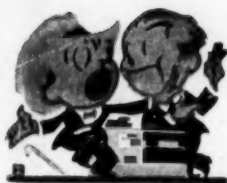
Camels hand out satisfaction you never before got from a cigarette. They have a wonderful smooth satisfying mildness yet that desirable body is all there! And, Camels do not tire your taste!

Another feature about Camels—they leave no unpleasant cigaretty aftertaste nor unpleasant cigaretty odor.

Camels superiority is best proved by comparing them with any cigarette in the world at any price.

R. J. REYNOLDS TOBACCO CO., Winston-Salem, N.C.

# He was a poor actor but he got by!



THE OTHER day.  
I WAS in a cigar store.  
AND A man came in.  
TO BUY cigarettes.  
AND HE had a cold.  
AND WAS so hoarse.  
HE COULDN'T make.  
THE CLERK understand.  
JUST WHAT he wanted.  
AND HE got madder.  
EVERY TIME.  
HE DREW a brand.  
HE DIDN'T want.  
HE POUNDED the case.  
AND TRIED to talk.  
BUT HE only wheezed.  
AND HE made signs.  
WITH HIS fingers.  
BUT THEY didn't get over.  
AND FINALLY.  
HE THOUGHT he'd try.  
TO ACT it out.

AND HE closed his eyes.  
AND MADE his face.  
SERENE AND calm.  
AND SMILED and looked.  
ABSOLUTELY CONTENTED.  
AND THE clerk said.  
"I GOT you, Steve!"  
AND HANDED him.  
A PACKAGE of.  
THOSE CIGARETTES.  
THAT SATISFY.



SATISFY? You said it! Those fine Turkish and Domestic tobaccos and that can't-be-copied Chesterfield blend *s-a-t-i-s-f-y* with every puff! And the moisture-proof, glassine-wrapped, special package keeps 'em the way you want 'em—fine, full-flavored, firm and fresh—always!

# They Satisfy Chesterfield

## CIGARETTES

*Liggett & Myers Tobacco*